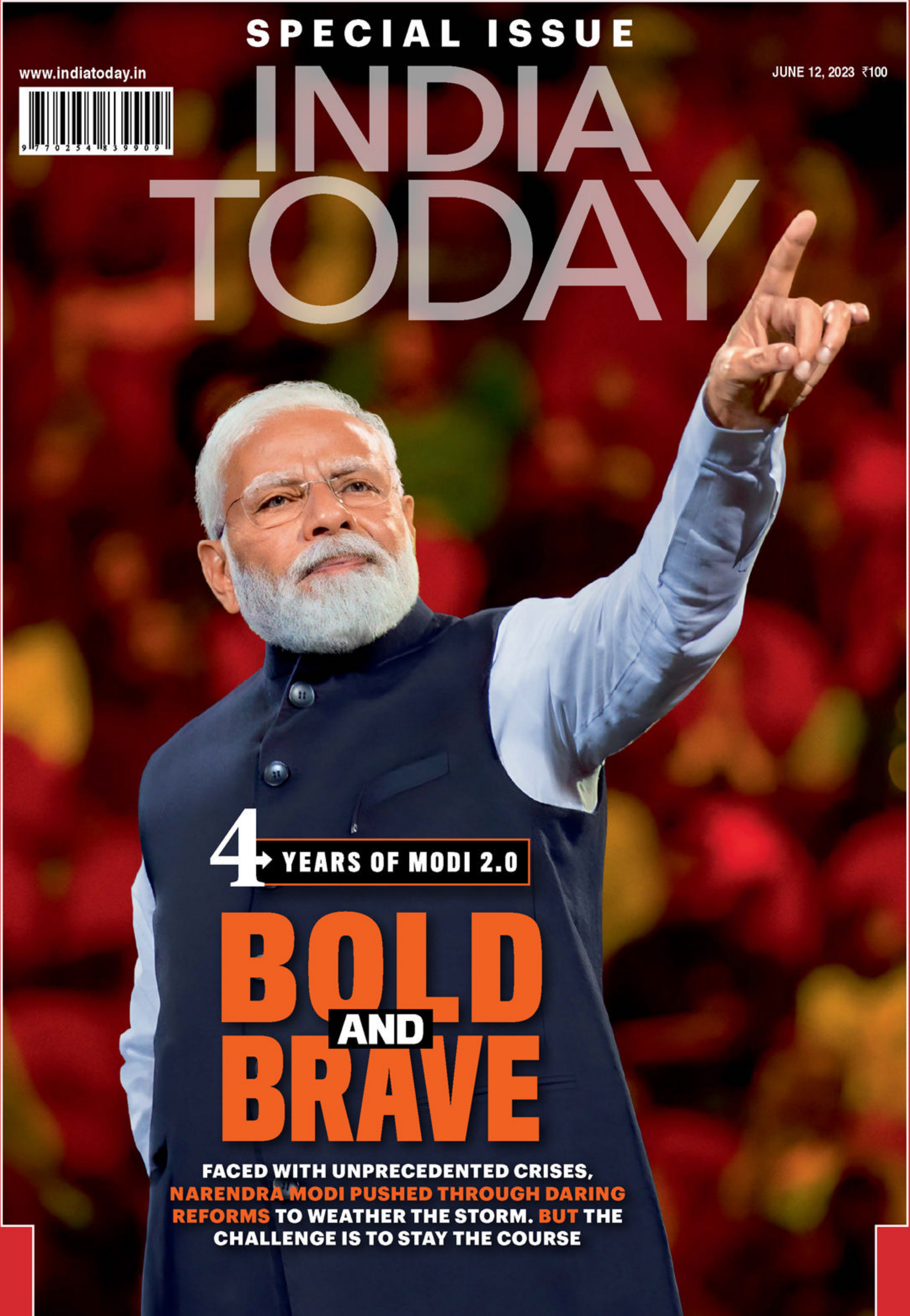
SPECIAL ISSUE

www.indiatoday.in

INDIA TODAY

JUNE 12, 2023 ₹100



4 YEARS OF MODI 2.0

BOLD AND BRAVE

FACED WITH UNPRECEDENTED CRISES, NARENDRA MODI PUSHED THROUGH DARING REFORMS TO WEATHER THE STORM. BUT THE CHALLENGE IS TO STAY THE COURSE

DL (DS)-03/MP/2022-23-24; RNI NO. 28587/75 REGISTERED NO. DL(ND)-11/6068/2021-22-2023; LICENSED TO POST WPP NO. U(C)-88/2021-23; FARIDABAD/05/2023-25

CC

Volume 48-Number 24; Published on every Friday of Advance Week; Posted at LPC Delhi—RMS—Delhi—110006 on Every Friday & Saturday; Total number of Pages 76 (including cover pages)

VISIT…

LANZAROTE
Caliente.com

N. L. Dalmia®
Institute of Management
Studies and Research
(A School of Excellence of N. L. Dalmia Educational Society)

॥ तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ॥

ADMISSIONS OPEN

Batch
2023-25

POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN MANAGEMENT

(Finance/Marketing/HR/Business Analytics)

We Nurture. We Transform. We Create Global Business Leaders.

Ranked 2nd In Mumbai
Times B School Ranking Survey 2023

NATIONAL BOARD OF ACCREDITATION
NBA Accredited PGDM Program

AIU Approved PGDM Program MBA Equivalence

'A' Grade NAAC Accredited

AICTE Approved

A**
CRISIL National Level

A***
CRISIL State Level

100%
Placement Record*

7700+
Global Alumni Network

25.5 LPA
Highest Package

Scores Accepted: CAT'22/XAT'23/CMAT'23/MH-CET'23/MAT'22 or '23 & ATMA'22 or '23

- **South Asia's Largest 24 Terminals Bloomberg Financial Lab.**
- **14+ Value Added Certificates.**
- **Eminent faculties from IIM's and IIT's.**
- **Financial Assistance, Scholarships, Easy EMI options.**
- **Education Loan facilities are available.**

Apply Now at www.nldalmia.in

Srishti, Sector-1, Mira Road (E), Thane,
Mumbai Metropolitan Region - 401107, Maharashtra, India.
Tel: 6389 222 555 Fax: +91-22 4299 0088
Email: admissions@nldalmia.in

**(Batch 20-22) Applicable to only those students who have opted for/registered for placements*
Past Record is no guarantee of future prospects

FROM THE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The recent inauguration of the grand new Parliament building neatly symbolises Prime Minister Narendra Modi's style of leadership. It was widely acknowledged that an upgraded parliament facility was needed, whether refurbished or new. The proposal had been bandied about for over a decade and the then Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar had even set up a high-powered committee for alternatives to the 1927-vintage building. During his second stint in office, Modi took the bull by its horns and an elegant, state-of-the-art building came up over 65,000 sq. ft within a period of two and a half years. Mindless of an accompanying storm of controversy, its inauguration on May 28 was a spectacle full of pomp and circumstance. That's Modi for you. Bold and brave in his decisions and actions, regardless of criticism.

As he completes one more year in office, the BJP is projecting his entire nine-year rule. We have covered his first stint in office extensively and therefore have decided to examine his second term as a run-up to the general election next year. This period is unique, as no Indian prime minister has been handed such a poisoned chalice. He has faced an unprecedented, species-threatening pandemic that flung the world economy into a recessionary spiral, and this was followed by the Ukraine conflict, which put further pressure on the economy.

SPECIAL ISSUE
INDIA TODAY
THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

June 6, 2022

His first term, in many ways, laid the foundation for what was to follow. He realised then that if he was to change India, he had to bring change to the bottom of India's pyramid—the toiling masses. One of his first initiatives was the introduction of the JAM trinity—Jan Dhan Yojana for opening bank accounts, Aadhaar to establish a unique identity, and mobile connectivity for digitisation. This was combined with the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, as part of which 110 million toilets were built across India, transforming the lives of millions, especially the women. This was followed by schemes dealing with basic necessities like gas connections, affordable housing and electricity. Modi's only mis-step in the first term was the ill-conceived demonetisation, when 86.4 per cent of the country's total currency by value became worthless overnight.

Buoyed by his renewed mandate in May 2019, he got off to a flying start. In July 2019, he criminalised triple talaq; in August, he audaciously abrogated Article 370 to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special status; in December, he passed the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act. In early 2020, Covid-19 hit India. In the management of the pandemic, Modi 2.0 came into full form. The lockdown of 2020 was akin to the shock-and-awe methods of Modi 1.0, especially demonetisation, and the second wave of 2021 was particularly harsh. But the regime learnt its lessons. Retracting from panic responses, it got down to serious business. At 2.2 billion vaccine doses, India rolled out the world's biggest immunisation programme. Pandemic infrastructure expanded dramatically—from 14 testing labs, we now have more than 3,300, private and government included. And Ayushman Bharat brought a safety net to 107.4 million poor families.

The refusal to panic was evident also in the way the economic 'long Covid' was handled. What India got was not instant relief by way of monetary largesse. Modi resisted the temptation that even countries like the US succumbed to, and that paid off in terms of a stable economy amid a tottering world. Inflation was crushing, but the alternative could have been anarchic—and an expanding welfare net cushioned the distress.

Most strikingly, Modi turned crisis into opportunity. Big, bold reforms lit up that murky phase—a massive infra push, the Production-Linked Incentive Scheme, the privatisation of Air India, the partial offloading of LIC, defence manufacturing going towards self-reliance, the forces being restructured first with the appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff in 2020 and then through the Agnipath scheme in 2022, the beaver-like Nitin Gadkari ensuring that highways zipped along at more than double the 12-km-a-day speed recorded in 2015, the Nal Jal Yojana, a digital backbone being laid for targeted welfare. For a pandemic period, an impressive roster.

Foreign policy, the domain that tracks India's graph in the world, was an equally tough mountain to climb. An overbearing China threatened our 3,488-km border along various points of fragility. As the game of attrition went on, experts spoke of wounds both tactical and territorial. But New Delhi hunkered down too, and responded with strategic countermoves with a wider international coalition, especially the Quad. Now, a deeper embrace of the US could have had tricky consequences as the Russia-Ukraine conflict erupted in 2022, but the Modi regime navigated India to a singular path that balanced old ties with new imperatives. Foreign minister S. Jaishankar paid his bills as one of Modi's ablest ministerial aides. And now, G20 inverts the symbolism of India seeking a place at the high table: it is the host itself. India also decided to plough its own trade policy furrow by not joining large trade blocs like the RCEP and aggressively pursuing bilateral trade agreements.

Go through the following pages put together by our bureaus, and what you see is a gritty negotiator transacting with the future. It's not a cloudless sky: joblessness is a bane, social harmony remains a problematic area and inflation is intransigent. Going into the home stretch for the big battle of 2024, delivery will be even more key, but you can expect Modi to continue on his path for bold and dramatic actions. For the people will be striking their own deal between present and future.

(Aroon Purie)

INDIA TODAY
www.indiatoday.in

CHAIRMAN AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Aroon Purie
VICE CHAIRPERSON: Kalli Purie
GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dinesh Bhatia

GROUP EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: Raj Chengappa

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Manoj Sharma

GROUP CREATIVE EDITOR: Nilanjan Das; **GROUP PHOTO EDITOR:** Bandeep Singh
EDITOR (FEATURES): Kai Jabir Friese
MANAGING EDITORS: Sunil Menon, S. Sahaya Ranjit
EXECUTIVE EDITORS: M.G. Arun, Manisha Saroop, Kaushik Deka
SENIOR DEPUTY EDITORS: Sangram K. Parhi; Hyderabad: Amarnath K. Menon
DEPUTY EDITORS: Sasi Nair, Anilesh S. Mahajan;
Jaipur: Rohit Parihar; Mumbai: Suhani Singh
SENIOR EDITORS: Pradip R. Sagar, Ashish Mukherjee;
Patna: Amitabh Srivastava
SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Sonali Acharjee, Saikat Niyogi;
Kolkata: Romita Sengupta; Bhopal: Rahul Noronha
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Ajay Sukumaran
SENIOR ASSISTANT EDITOR: Vipul Grover
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Harshita Mishra
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT: Lucknow: Prashant Srivastava
PHOTO DEPARTMENT: Rajwant Singh Rawat,
Chandra Deep Kumar (Principal Photographer),
Mumbai: Mandar Suresh Deodhar (Chief Photographer)
PHOTO RESEARCHERS: Prabhakar Tiwari (Chief Photo Researcher),
Saloni Vaid (Principal Photo Researcher)
CHIEF OF GRAPHICS: Tanmoy Chakraborty
ART DEPARTMENT: Sanjay Piplani (Deputy Creative Editor);
Angshuman De (Art Director); Bhoomesh Dutt Sharma, Santosh Kumar
Sharma (Assistant Art Directors); Siddhant Jumde (Chief Illustrator)
PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT: Harish Agarwal (Chief of Production),
Naveen Gupta (Chief Coordinator)

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHERS (IMPACT)
Vidya Menon,
Suparna Kumar

IMPACT TEAM
Senior General Managers: Mayur Rastogi (North), Jitendra Lad (West)
General Managers: Syed Naveed (Chennai), Krishnanand Nair (Bangalore)
GROUP CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER: Vivek Malhotra

SALES AND OPERATIONS
Deepak Bhatt, Senior General Manager (National Sales)
Vipin Bagga, General Manager (Operations)
Rajeev Gandhi, Deputy General Manager (North)
Yogesh Godhanlal Gautam, Deputy Regional Sales Manager (West)
S Paramasivam, Deputy Regional Sales Manager (South)

**Volume 48-Number 24; For the week
June 6-12, 2023, published on every Friday**

● Editorial/Corporate Office Living Media India Ltd., India Today Group Mediaplex, FC-8, Sector-16A, Film City, Noida - 201301; Phone: 0120-4807100
● Subscriptions: For assistance contact, Customer Care, India Today Group, C-9, Sector-10, Noida (UP) – 201301. email: wecare@intoday.com; Phone / Whatsapp: +91 8597 778 778 (Monday to Friday, 10 am – 6pm).
● Sales: Direct all trade enquiries to General Manager (Sales), Living Media India Limited, C-9, Sector-10, Noida-201301 (UP)
● Regd. Office: F-26, First Floor, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001.
● Impact Offices: 1201, 12th Floor, Tower 2 A, One Indiabulls Centre, (Jupiter Mills), S.B. Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai-400013; Phone: 66063355; Fax: 66063226 ● E-1, Ground Floor, Videocon Towers, Jhandewalan Extn, New Delhi ● Guna Complex, 5th Floor, Main Building, No.443, Anna Salai, Chennai-600018; Phone: 2847 8525 ● 201-204 Richmond Towers, 2nd Floor, 12, Richmond Road, Bangalore-560025; Phones: 22212448, 22213037, 22218343; Fax: 22218335; ● 52, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, 4th Floor, Kolkata-700071; Phones: 22825398; Fax: 22827254; ● 6-3-885/7/B, Somajiguda, Hyderabad-500082; Phone: 23401657, 23400479, 23410100, 23402481, 23410982, 23411498; Fax: 23403484 ● 39/1045, Karakkatt Road, Kochi 682016; Phones: 2377057, 2377058 ; Fax: 2377059 ● 2/C, "Suryarath Bldg", 2nd Floor, Behind White House, Panchwati, Office C.G. Road, Ahmedabad-380006; Phone: 26560393, 26560929; Fax: 26565293 ● Copyright Living Media India Ltd. All rights reserved throughout the world. Reproduction in any manner is prohibited.

Printed and published by Manoj Sharma on behalf of Living Media India Limited. Printed at Thomson Press India Limited, 18-35 Milestone, Delhi Mathura Road, Faridabad-121007, (Haryana) and at Rajhans Enterprises, 134, Industrial Town, 4th Main Road, Rajajinagar, Bengaluru-560044, (Karnataka).

Published at F-26, First Floor, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001.

Editor: Raj Chengappa.

● INDIA TODAY does not take the responsibility for returning unsolicited publication material.

All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent courts and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only

SYNDICATIONS TODAY
For **reprint rights** and **syndication** enquiries, contact syndications@intoday.com or call +91-120-4078000
www.syndicationstoday.in

INSIDE

LEISURE
INDIAN OCEAN BACK WITH A BANG PG 67

LEISURE
Q&A WITH SANYA MALHOTRA PG 76

08

4 YEARS OF MODI 2.0

BOLD AND BRAVE

Faced with unprecedented crises, Narendra Modi pushed through daring reforms to weather the storm. But the challenge is to stay the course

Cover Photograph by **BRENT LEWIN/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES**
(Image enhanced and optimised for cover use)

Readers are recommended to make appropriate enquiries before sending money, incurring expenses or entering into commitments in relation to any advertisement appearing in this publication. The India Today Group does not vouch for any claims made by the advertisers of products and services. The printer, publisher, editor-in-chief and the editor of the India Today Group publications shall not be held liable for any consequences in the event of such claims not being honoured by the advertisers.

SCAN HERE TO SUBSCRIBE

FOR SUBSCRIPTION ASSISTANCE, CONTACT: Customer Care, India Today Group, C-9, Sector-10, Noida (UP) - 201301. email: wecare@intoday.com | Phone / Whatsapp: +91 8597 778 778 (Monday to Friday, 10 am - 6pm)

E-MAIL to: **letters.editor@intoday.com** or log on to **www.indiatoday.in**

PATANJALI®

SAY NO TO CHEMICALS

Choose Patanjali to get natural cleansing & beauty

Made with Haldi, Chandan, Aloe Vera, Neem, Rose and

80% Natural Ingredients

Use Patanjali Herbal Bath Soap

NEW
PATANJALI®
ALOEVERA KANTI
BODY CLEANSER
150 g
Soothing & Refreshing
NEW
PATANJALI®
Haldi Chandan Kanti
Body Cleanser
FOR NATURAL GLOWING SKIN.
150 g
NEW
PATANJALI®
NEEM KANTI
BODY CLEANSER
ANTIBACTERIAL
150 g
Natural Protection
PATANJALI
Rose
ROSE BODY CLEANSER
Hand Made
Enriched with Aloevera and 99% pure glycerine
Net Wt. 125 g

Patanjali Face Wash Range

PATANJALI
HERBAL FACIAL FOAM
Anti-Pollution Face Wash
With activated charcoal, honey & vitamin
A C E
60 ml
PATANJALI
saundarya
NEEM TULSI
Face Wash
Prevents Acne & Pimples
100 g
Phthalates Free, Parabens
PATANJALI
saundarya
face wash
Added goodness of Pearl + Vit. B3 for spotless glowing skin
Cleanse deeply, remove dead skin cells & dirt
100g
PATANJALI
Orange - Aloe Vera
With Neem & Tulsi
Face Wash
ऑरेंज-एलोवेरा

- Free from harmful chemicals
- Made with natural herbs
- Beneficial in skin problems
- Suitable for all skin types

Shop Online- www.patanjaliayurved.net | Customer Care Number - 18001804108 | Email ID - feedback@patanjaliayurved.org | Website - www.patanjaliayurved.org

4 YEARS OF MODI GOVERNMENT 2.0

16 HOME AFFAIRS **AMIT SHAH**

18 FINANCE **NIRMALA SITHARAMAN**

20 COMMERCE **PIYUSH GOYAL**

22 DEFENCE **RAJNATH SINGH**

24 EXTERNAL AFFAIRS **S. JAISHANKAR**

26 EDUCATION **DHARMENDRA PRADHAN**

28 ROAD TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS **NITIN GADKARI**

30 RAILWAYS **ASHWINI VAISHNAW**

32 CIVIL AVIATION **JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA**

34 PORTS, SHIPPING & WATERWAYS **SARBANANDA SONOWAL**

35 PETROLEUM & NATURAL GAS **HARDEEP PURI**

36 POWER **R.K. SINGH**

37 COAL, MINES & MINERALS, PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS **PRALHAD JOSHI**

40 HEAVY INDUSTRIES **MAHENDRA NATH PANDEY**

40 LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT **BHUPENDER YADAV**

INDUSTRY, TEXTILES **PIYUSH GOYAL**

41

42 MSMEs **NARAYAN RANE**

44 AGRICULTURE & FARMERS' WELFARE **NARENDRA TOMAR**

45 FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY & DAIRYING **PARSHOTTAM RUPALA**

46 RURAL DEVELOPMENT & PANCHAYATI RAJ **GIRIRAJ SINGH**

47 AYUSH **SARBANANDA SONOWAL**

50 HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE **MANSUKH L. MANDAVIYA**

51 CHEMICALS & FERTILISERS **MANSUKH L. MANDAVIYA**

52 SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY **JITENDRA SINGH**

54 COMMUNICATIONS; ELECTRONICS & IT **ASHWINI VAISHNAW**

55 LAW & JUSTICE **ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL**

56 ENVIRONMENT, FOREST & CLIMATE CHANGE **BHUPENDER YADAV**

58 INFORMATION & BROADCASTING **ANURAG THAKUR**

59 YOUTH AFFAIRS & SPORTS **ANURAG THAKUR**

60 CULTURE, TOURISM, DoNER **G.K. REDDY**

62 WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT **SMRITI IRANI**

63 MINORITY AFFAIRS **SMRITI IRANI**

63 TRIBAL AFFAIRS **ARJUN MUNDA**

64 JAL SHAKTI **GAJENDRA S. SHEKHAWAT**

Note to the reader: From time to time, you will see pages titled 'An Impact Feature' or 'Focus' in INDIA TODAY. This is no different from an advertisement and the magazine's editorial staff is not involved in its creation in any way.

10 YEARS OF UNIVERSITY RECOGNITION
20 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

REVA UNIVERSITY
Bengaluru, India

Navigate Your Path Towards Excellence

Scan the QR code
and Start your journey today!

320
340
NW
20
40
NE
60

- Industry Aligned Curriculum
- 450+ Recruitment Partners
- 45+ International collaborations
- QS Asia ranked University
- NEP 2020 Compliant
- 205+ Digital Classrooms to Support Hybrid Learning
- Alignment with SDGs
- Learn and earn opportunity
- World Class Amenities

- Engineering
- REVA Business School
- Architecture
- Design
- Legal Studies
- Science & Technology
- Commerce & Management Studies
- Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
- Performing Arts & Indic Studies

call **90211 90211**

Apply Online @ **reva.edu.in**

OFFICE OF ADMISSIONS
REVA University, Rukmini Knowledge Park,
Kattigenahalli, Yelahanka, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560064

BOLD AND BRAVE

FACED WITH A POLYCRISIS, NARENDRA MODI PUSHED THROUGH DARING REFORMS TO WEATHER THE STORM. BUT THE CHALLENGE IS TO STAY THE COURSE

By RAJ CHENGAPPA

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI'S PENCHANT FOR alliteration is well-known. Among his favourites is 2S: Speed and Scale. He is fond of saying that if the previous governments thought speed was a luxury and scale a risk, he as prime minister made "speed the ambition of India and scale its strength". Modi has demonstrated these qualities in ample measure in almost everything he has achieved in his nine years of office and more so in the four years of his second term.

The most recent example of this is the swank, state-of-the-art, hexagonal new Parliament building that he inaugurated on May 28. The complex came up at a remarkable speed, taking just two and a half years for completion despite Covid restrictions kicking in almost from the start. Then there is the scale. The new building has a seating capacity of 1,272 for both houses of Parliament. That is 60 per cent more than the 790 seats in the original structure, and enough to accommodate any expansion in the number of MPs up to the next century. In terms of grandeur, the new Parliament combines tradition with modernity—the imposing sandstone façade, peacock motifs on its high ceilings, handloom carpets on the floor and the intricately carved wooden décor complement the computer tablets on every seat. In his address at the inaugural ceremony, the PM said, “This is the New India that is setting new goals, forging new paths. There is a new enthusiasm, a new thinking, a new vision, and a new resolution.”

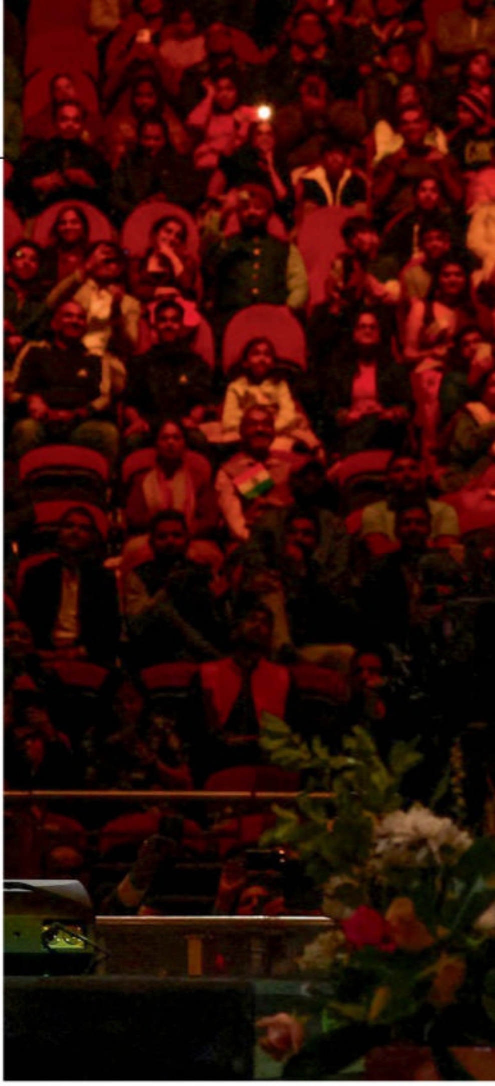
There is also a third S that the PM holds dear—Symbolism. The PM has an impeccable sense of timing in whatever he does. The inauguration of Parliament was on a day Modi completed four years of his second term as prime minister and his ninth year in office. May 28 also marked the 140th birth anniversary of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, an ideological touchstone for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that Modi belongs to and its progenitor, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The day before was the 59th death anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first prime minister. His supporters saw it as a signal of the BJP bringing the curtain down on the Nehruvian era and heralding the arrival of the Hindutva epoch that Savarkar had propounded and which Modi embodies.

His eloquent inaugural speech in Parliament, though, seemed to echo Nehru’s famed ‘Tryst with Destiny’ speech on the intervening night of August 14-15, 1947. “There come some moments in the development journey of every nation that become immortal forever,” he said, “Some dates become indelible signatures of history on the forehead of time.” In many ways, Modi, too, has left his imprint on history for posterity by building, among other things, a spanking new temple of modern India. Indeed, at the end of the fourth year of his second term, he has built a legacy that has broken free from the past, demonstrating in the process a style of leadership that is unique and puts him in a league of his own.

EYE ON THE FUTURE

Examples of this are legion. When bureaucrat-turned-politician Ashwini Vaishnaw took over as the Union minister for railways in addition to two other portfolios in July last year, among the first things he did was to make a two-hour presentation to the prime minister on how to upgrade 50 railway stations across the country. Modi listened to him intently throughout, a quality others who have interacted with the prime minister vouch for too. Unlike other leaders who are satisfied with broad brush-strokes, Modi likes going into the finer detail. And so he asked Vaishnaw incisive questions, like how his proposed changes would make a difference to the life of the *saadhaaran manav* (common man). And whether it would bring a structural change to the Indian economy and not be merely cosmetic. After making an exhaustive presentation, Vaishnaw was surprised and disappointed that the prime minister did not approve it. Later that night, at 11 pm, Modi called Vaishnaw and told him why: “The designs you presented are good for today, but you must come up with a plan that thinks 50 years ahead. That is the thought process I wanted to share with you.” When Vaishnaw reworked the plan, making it more futuristic, he got the approval he was seeking from the PM.

The same goes for other ministries. Modi is always looking for the long-term vision in any scheme or project his government announces. Bharat Lal, the soft-spoken director-general of the National Centre for Good Governance and someone who has worked with Modi since his days as the Gujarat chief minister, says that nothing he does is ad hoc. As prime minister, he focused on building infrastructure that may have had long gestation periods but which he put on the fast track by providing adequate financial and manpower resources and employing technology to monitor and speed up implementation. As an example, Lal cites the Jal Jeevan Mission that Modi announced on August 15, 2019, shortly after the



GETTY IMAGES

> **“THIS IS THE NEW INDIA THAT IS SETTING NEW GOALS. THERE IS A NEW ENTHUSIASM, A NEW THINKING, A NEW VISION, AND A NEW RESOLUTION”**
>
> **–PM NARENDRA MODI,** inaugural speech in new Parliament building

THE BOSS
PM Modi addresses the crowds in Australia

start of his second term. Its aim was to ensure that every rural household was supplied with 55 litres of water per person a day (per WHO norms) through functional household taps. It was a tall order, as barely 32 million or 16 per cent of the 194 million rural households had tap water supply in 2019. Modi set aside Rs 3.6 lakh crore over five years for the scheme.

Lal, who was its first mission director, used technology, including data analytics, AI and IoT, to monitor its implementation down to each household, building a transparent database and dashboard to track progress. In the past four years, 89 million rural households have been provided with tap water—as on May 31, 2023, some 121 million households or 62 per cent stand covered. It is a stupendous achievement that matches the funding and building of 110 million toilets in individual houses as part of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, sharply reducing the widespread practice of open defecation and was of immense help especially for women in rural areas.

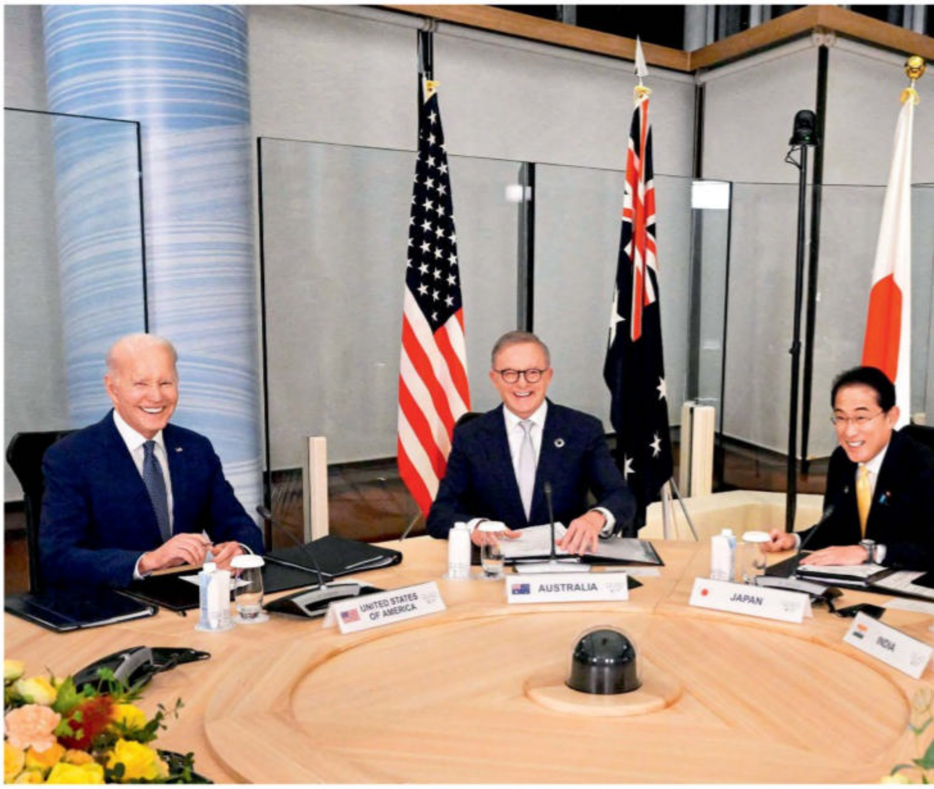
HIGH ON DIGITISATION

If Rajiv Gandhi brought computers to India during his tenure as prime minister in the 1980s, Modi has taken digitisation to an altogether different and higher level. He upgraded the vast physical digital infrastructure his predecessors Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Dr Manmohan Singh had built in their tenures and converted it into a massive force multiplier for governance. Amitabh Kant, the flamboyant and articulate former CEO of NITI Aayog and currently India's sherpa for the upcoming G20 summit in Delhi, says the digital revolution ushered in by Modi has proved to be a game-changer in the country's development. Modi oversaw the universalisation of digital identities and pushed for the opening of a phenomenal 400 million Jan Dhan bank accounts for India's unbanked poor during his first term. From just 17 per cent women who had a bank account when the scheme started, the figure is well over 80 per cent today, a sign of true empowerment. By linking Jan Dhan accounts then with Aadhaar cards as identity proofs and providing mobile connectivity through what Modi christened the JAM trinity, he was able to facilitate speedy digital transfer of money for welfare programmes under the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme.

It put an immediate end to the enormous leakage in rural funds and curbed corruption. As Rajiv Gandhi had famously said, for every Re 1 the government set aside for welfare schemes meant for the poor, only 15 paise reached the beneficiary. DBT changed that significantly. "When the Digital India movement started in 2016, we were 123rd in the world in terms of data consumption," says

Kant. "Today, we are number one. In terms of digital transactions, we are doing 11 times more than what the US and Europe combined are doing, and four times more than China. That is the revolution Prime Minister Modi has brought about on the digital front. This is what he meant by minimum government, maximum governance."

Infrastructure, particularly road construction, too, saw a major push in Modi's first term. Under his go-getter roads minister Nitin Gadkari, 50,000 km of highways were constructed in the first five years alone compared to 25,718 km during Manmohan Singh's decade-long prime ministership.



GETTY IMAGES

MODI IS LEVERAGING THE PRESIDENCY OF THE G20 AND SCO THIS YEAR TO ENSURE INDIA HAS A PERMANENT PLACE AT THE GLOBAL HIGH TABLE

MESSIAH OF THE POOR

It may seem appropriate to treat Modi's nine-year reign as a continuum, as many of the major programmes he began in his first term fructified in his second. But it is important to segregate the two terms and assess them separately. In the first term, Modi's style of leadership was akin to Indira Gandhi's, including taking decisive and far-reaching economic and political decisions that disrupted the status quo even while staying hard-focused on addressing the plight of India's poor. If Indira Gandhi took the drastic step of resorting to bank nationalisation to alleviate poverty, Narendra Modi pushed for the centralisation of taxes and ushered in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime to rationalise and enhance revenue collection and stimulate economic growth.

Again, like Indira Gandhi declared national emergency in 1975, ostensibly to quell the Opposition, which she claimed was blocking development schemes for the poor, Modi triggered a financial emergency when overnight he enforced the demonetisation of high-value currency notes in November 2016. The draconian measure, he claimed, was necessary to rid India of black money and clean up the corrupt political system. Even as he apologised for the hardships his move caused the poor, especially the endless queues they had to endure to exchange money at the banks, he couched it in patriotic terms, saying the people of India did not mind suffering hardship if it was for a greater good. He also said his intentions were honest, only the implementation was lagging. However, unlike Indira Gandhi, who lost the election in 1977, Modi retained his electoral fortunes.

Both Indira Gandhi, with her Garibi Hatao slogan, and Modi, with his focus on the *saadhaaran manav*, have cast themselves as messiahs of the poor via their massive welfare schemes. They have also been lauded for their gutsy decisions on the national security front—Indira Gandhi for crafting the victory in the 1971 Bangladesh war and Modi for carrying out surgical strikes after the Uri attacks in 2017 and conducting air strikes deep inside Pakistan after the attack on Pulwama in 2019. The last decision was to turn the tide in favour of Modi again in the 2019 general election, which his party won by a convincing majority. Indira Gandhi had to wait three years before storming back to power in 1980 following her ouster after Emergency.

FIREFIGHTING ON ALL FRONTS

In his second term, Modi would be confronted by a polycrisis of a magnitude that only Nehru possibly had to handle after taking over as India's first prime minister. Partition had plunged the country into a dire economic crisis following the enormous disruption in the movement of goods and services. Then, he had to unite the warring states that were at the time nothing more than a loose conglomeration of administrative provinces and princely kingdoms. Meanwhile, he had to thwart the Pakistan-directed tribal invasion to capture Kashmir and fashion a non-aligned foreign policy to ensure India kept equal distance from the world's two

RATHER THAN GIVE DOLES DURING COVID, MODI TREBLED GOVERNMENT CAPEX ON INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUSHED FOR RADICAL REFORM WHICH SAW INDIA EMERGE AS THE FASTEST GROWING MAJOR ECONOMY POST-COVID

superpowers—the US and Soviet Union.

Modi's troubles came a year into his second term, first in the form of a once-in-a-century pandemic that took millions of lives and triggered unprecedented worldwide economic chaos. Then, even as India and the world were battling Covid-19, China decided to launch major intrusions across the Line of Actual Control. The resultant clash would lead to soldiers getting killed in border conflict for the first time since the 1999 Kargil war. Just as Nehru was blamed for being naive about Chinese intentions in 1962, Modi faced flak for the Indian army's failure to notice the Chinese intrusions on the LAC till it was too late. Finally, just as Modi sought to bring a modicum of stability and growth in the economy, India and the world were rocked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, causing worldwide food and oil shortages and fuelling inflation.

What distinguished Modi 2.0 from 1.0 was his ability to tackle multiple black swan events and steer the country out of the multiple crises they threw the country into. The reason Modi was able to do so was owing to his trait of seeing opportunity in every difficulty rather than difficulty in every opportunity. Dr Pramod Kumar Mishra, the prime minister's principal secretary, recalls, "The pandemic was a once-in-a-lifetime event and no country was clear what the best response would be. There were too many uncertainties and unknowns. In addition, there was the war in Ukraine and the border threat from China. We were forced to go beyond the usual pathways and chart our own unique course. It involved taking great risks, as a wrong decision could lead to a major disaster."

The reticent Mishra, who has worked with Modi when he was Gujarat chief minister, says the prime minister handled the crisis methodically, exhibiting rock-like calm in the midst of major storms. "We analysed the whole situation thoroughly, ensuring that the prime minister had a high degree of clarity as to what India should do," says Mishra. "As important was the political will of the prime minister to take bold but tough decisions and to use the opportunity to go ahead with major reforms amid the polycrisis and put India back on the growth path."

BUCKING THE TREND

To deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, Modi took the daring decision to impose a total lockdown and refrain from doling out huge cash relief to help everyone tide over the crisis as leaders in other countries were doing. Battling criticism from several quarters for not providing enough monetary succour to his suffering countrymen, Modi opted instead for targeted stimulus to the deserving while pushing major reform to kickstart the economy. That judgement seems to have been correct in hindsight as the excess liquidity in other economies has pushed up inflation while India has been able to keep it within manageable levels.

To combat Covid and save lives, Modi concentrated on both the development and delivery of vaccines. Not only did it see over 950 million people in India get inoculated against the virus, the supply of Covid vaccines to other needy nations also won him plaudits internationally. Modi also launched the innovative Ayushman Bharat scheme that provides health insurance of up to Rs 5 lakh for below the poverty line families. He also speeded up the PM Awas Yojana to provide over 30 million houses to the rural and urban poor. As Vaishnaw says, "Prime Minister Modi has brought about a fundamental difference in the lives of poor people—permanent change is visible wherever you go in villages, whether in housing, toilets, gas connections, electricity and water—the basic necessities to make their lives more comfortable."

Modi has also focused on boosting his government's capital expenditure, taking it from Rs 3.35 lakh crore in 2019-20 to Rs 10 lakh crore in the current budget, or from 1.7 per cent of GDP before the pandemic to 3.3 per cent after it. The focus on infrastructure has been both in terms of speed and scale, whether in the construction of highways, rural roads, railways or renewable energy projects. To improve efficiency, provide better governance and avoid project duplication, Modi in October 2021 launched PM Gati Shakti, a national master plan for multimodal connectivity that consisted of a digital platform bringing together 16 ministries, including railways and highways. To enhance manufacturing, attract foreign investment and provide jobs, the PM launched a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme in 14 sectors. The foreign direct investment policy was further liberalised—most sectors were opened to 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route. Says Kant, the CEO of NITI Aayog then, “The prime minister is very futuristic in his approach and focused on technology. He is a very hard taskmaster. He always adds value to our presentations. He wants India to be the best in the world in delivery, never second-class.” Before the pandemic, Modi had pared the corporate tax base for existing companies from 30 per cent to 22 per cent, a move that helped the economy reboot post-Covid.

Other economic reforms included opening key sectors like space, atomic energy and defence to more private sector participation and introducing far-reaching reforms to free agriculture of stifling government controls. Modi presented them as part of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan to make India self-reliant, in May 2020, in the thick of the first phase of Covid, setting aside Rs 27.1 lakh crore for it for five years. Says Mishra, “The reforms initiated during Covid as well as the steep increase in capital investment by the government saw India register a GDP growth of 7.2 per cent in 2022-23, making it the fastest-growing major economy in the world, ahead of even China.”

The agriculture sector, though, showed itself closed to the idea of reform. Major protests broke out among farmers in the key foodgrain-producing states of Punjab and Haryana, forcing the Modi government to withdraw its contentious farm laws and apologise for the inconvenience caused. The PM, his aides say, has imbibed valuable lessons from these setbacks and is much more thorough about the implications and downsides of major decisions before going ahead with them. So, when it came to education, the National Education Policy or NEP, 2020, was announced after much debate, and is expected to bring about far-reaching changes in the curriculum. College admissions, too, are set for radical change with the introduction of the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) last year to provide students with a more level playing field. Even GST was modified to remove irritants, which saw both compliance and collection shoot up considerably and exceed targets.

On foreign policy, Modi has been both bold and brave. He has fashioned a multi-aligned foreign policy that has enabled India to do business with Russia after its invasion of Ukraine even as it collaborates with the US to deal with Chinese belligerence. On China’s border intrusion, Modi firmly pushed for the restoration of status quo by making military manoeuvres to degrade the Chinese offensive. He also engaged allies, including the US, Japan and Australia, in the mission to contain China by energising the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad.

India’s exports, too, are looking good after the Modi government worked to remove bottlenecks. Merchandise exports crossed the $400 billion mark in FY22, and service exports are seeing a boom too. Two major trade agreements have been signed with Australia and the UAE. The government seems to be following a give-and-take approach. Import duties for Australian wines, among other things, have dropped considerably.

Meanwhile, Modi is leveraging the presidency of the G20 and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation this year to enhance India’s international stature. Internally, his government shut the door firmly on China and Pakistan’s claim that Kashmir was disputed territory by abrogating Article 370 in an audacious move, bifurcating the state into the Union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

Vande Bharat

ANI

THE LAST MILE

In the final months of his second term, says Mishra, the prime minister is focusing on implementation and improving the speed of delivery. He and Mishra are personally monitoring all the major programmes of the government, identifying bottlenecks and pushing hard for outcomes. Modi has adopted the unusual approach of sending out joint secretaries from various ministries to visit states and give on-the-ground feedback and fine-tune programmes accordingly.

However, there are several areas where progress has been slow. Despite announcing major privatisation and disinvestment plans, barring Air India and to some extent, LIC, the government missed 30 per cent of its disinvestment target last year and is still to retreat from a large number of areas. In job-creating sectors such as textiles, tourism and skill development, there have been inexplicable lags in performance. One of the major engines of growth, exports, is showing signs of stagnation; FDI, too, worryingly contracted by as much as 22 per cent or a fifth in 2022-23. The Opposition criticises Modi for being arrogant and

REAL-TIME MONITORING OF HIS MANY SCHEMES AND ENSURING ADHERENCE TO TIMELINES HAS BEEN THE HALLMARK OF MODI'S PRIME MINISTERSHIP

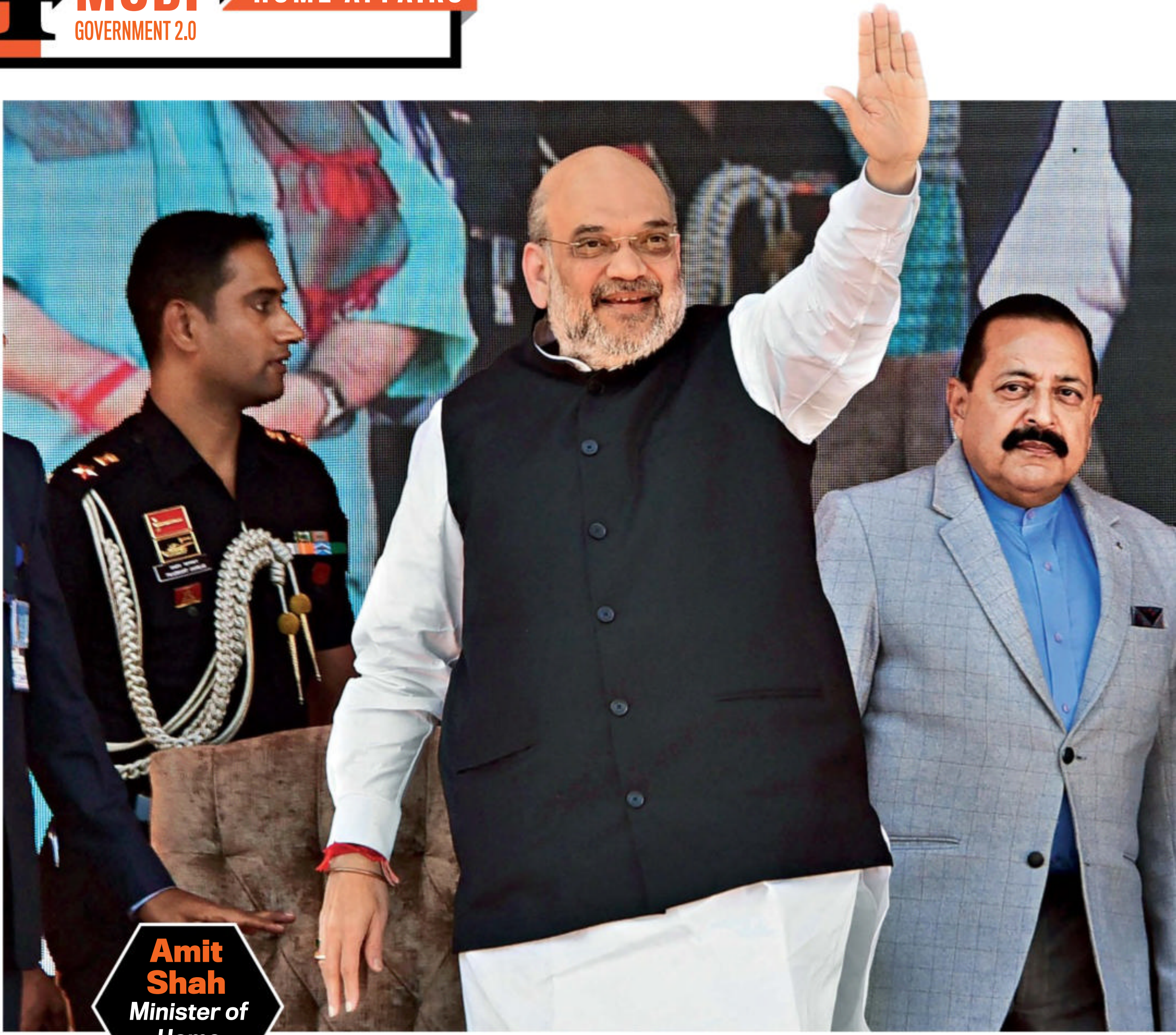
authoritarian and accuses him of unleashing central investigation agencies like the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation with trumped-up charges to neutralise opponents. Modi has to stay the course on reforms if his party is to win a full majority in the 2024 general election and he is to become prime minister for the third consecutive term—a feat only Nehru has accomplished thus far.

Meanwhile, Modi's style of leadership has become the subject of study in management circles. At the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, Ekkirala S. Srinivas, professor of organisational behaviour and HR Management, and an expert on leadership, points out that Modi's success lies in his extraordinary ability to establish a direct connect with people across different segments of society, speak in their language and highlight their issues. So when he goes to Varanasi, his constituency, for instance, he makes it a point to invoke Ganga *maiyya*, saying he is there at her behest, and when he lands up in Madanapalli in Andhra Pradesh soon after, he addresses the issues of tomato farmers there. He does not require the media or other intermediaries to strike a chord with the voter; he uses Mann Ki Baat as a major vehicle. "Modi appeals to their identity in a very rare, unique and powerful way," says Srinivas. "If you touch identity and invoke pride, you evoke powerful emotions as he does."

THE TRANSFORMER

Union minister Piyush Goyal, who has worked closely with Modi, also attributes his success to "the extraordinary empathy the prime minister has with the common man and the fact that despite reaching the pinnacle of success, he has never forgotten his humble past". The affable Goyal, an alumnus of the Harvard Business School, says what strikes him about Modi is his single-minded focus on the job at hand and complete lack of interest in taking vacations, having fun or shooting the breeze. Goyal once asked Modi whether he enjoyed eating food. His reply? "I eat to live, not live to eat." The minister finds in Modi an almost yogic quality of remaining totally in the moment, engaging intensely and not getting distracted by the thousands of other tasks he may have to attend to. What has been disconcerting for Goyal on many occasions is the prime minister's almost photographic memory. You will never find him with pen and paper at meetings, yet there have been several occasions when Goyal has made a 50-slide presentation and Modi has asked him to go back to a particular slide and explain why it is out of sync with the overall theme. In cabinet meetings, rather than hold forth himself, Modi relies on the group dynamic and encourages ministers to speak their mind while ensuring the discussions remain inclusive and participative to enable him to reach a considered decision. When it comes to follow-up and accountability, Modi is CEO-like in monitoring tasks and ensuring adherence to timelines.

Srinivas places Modi in the league of transformational leaders who are characterised more by charisma and exceptional articulation. His way of framing the narrative involves talking of the larger vision and using his personal example of probity and humble beginnings, which never fails to evoke admiration among the masses. "Modi enjoys a heroic charismatic image with an instant connect," he concludes. Even if he errs, he is able to convince people that his intentions are well-meaning and everything he does is for the greater good and not for personal advancement. What Srinivas would caution against is what he terms "the dark side of charisma that can afflict the best of leaders". With celebrity status, he warns, can come insecurity. "The ego intrudes and demands unquestioned loyalty as well as an arrogance that ends up as an 'I know best' attitude. Every leader needs to be aware of this and not fall into that trap," he says. Modi, Srinivas believes, should be aware of these and constantly fine-tune his actions to retain the trust of the nation. More so as a third term beckons and he appears to be in pole position to win it. If he does win a third term, it will give him the opportunity to stand on the same pedestal as Nehru who, despite his flaws, is the statesman every political leader aspires to emulate. ■



Amit Shah
Minister of Home Affairs

GETTY IMAGES

THE SECURITY CORDON

Amit Shah's home ministry has managed to manufacture peace in tough situations, be it Kashmir, Punjab or the Northeast, though Manipur is a reminder of fraught realities

BY PRADIP R. SAGAR

EVERY GOLDEN SCEPTRE IS BACKED BY A SABRE made of glinting steel. For Prime Minister Narendra Modi, that trusted gladiatorial lieutenant is Union home minister Amit Shah—the only one who ever gets to be named with him in one hyphenated breath. The rook that strikes frontally across the chessboard, the knight who moves in mysterious ways...Shah is both. Sometimes at the same time. On August 5, 2019, barely nine weeks into his new role, Shah pulled out a stunner by piloting the annulment of Article 370. Revoking Kashmir's special status was always a cornerstone of the BJP's politics, but obligatory mentions in the party manifesto had dulled it by repetition, causing not a ripple on the Jhelum. Modi-Shah had made bold to alter the status quo, on a dispute with a complex international flavour, in a way hitherto deemed impossible.

Managing the diplomatic fallout was the remit of his boss. What Shah had to tamp down on was any internal stirring of revolt. Kashmir had been restive ever since the 2016 killing of young Hizbul commander Burhan Wani—any recurrence of massive protests would have caused global face loss. The home minister left nothing to chance. Blanket security covered the Valley like winter snow, mobile internet was switched off for a five-month-long information blackout, former chief ministers Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti were put under preventive detention along with scores of others. The siege was as complete as it was sudden.

The upscaling of paramilitary presence had its payoffs. Just six months after the deadly Pulwama attack in 2019, militancy would go into hibernation. No major episode has marred the calendar till now; stray exceptions only proved the rule, This May, India even pulled off a G20 event in the Valley amid talk of last-minute venue changes. Statistics sketch a picture of normalcy eked out of the gloom. Clashes between the public and security forces—that staple of front-page photos—are down. So are the numbers of youths joining militancy. Between 2018 and 2022, the MHA claims, civilian killings fell by 23 per cent, deaths of security personnel by 66 per cent, and terror attacks/ encounters by 45 per cent. Tight vigil kept the borders antiseptic. The Centre today touts Kashmir as a 'tourist hotspot'. Tourist arrivals are said to have quadrupled from 600,000 in 2018 to 2.5 million. That's thousands of jobs.

Punjab, too, had to be managed. Its old wounds were showing signs of fresh bleeding: a socio-political landscape in ferment, the state police intelligence HQ targeted by a rocket-propelled grenade, gangland violence overlapping on old militant shadows, drugs and weapons being airdropped via drones in the border areas—and finally, a charismatic young radical troubling the waters. Under Shah, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has been keeping an eagle eye on proceedings, with extraditions, probes and chargesheets.

Though the recent flare-up in Manipur has been a setback, the MHA has recorded a litany of successes in the Northeast. Many insurgent groups were drawn into dialogue; peace pacts were signed with Twipra rebels in Tripura (August 2019), and Assam's Bodos (January 2020) and Karbis (September 2021); the Bru-Reang refugees of Mizoram/Tripura got a settlement (January 2020); and the Assam-Meghalaya border flare-up was managed with a pact (March 2022). Even if the Naga Accord of 2015 awaits its logical conclusion, the "improved security situation" has allowed the Centre to withdraw the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from many parts of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur, though the recent Kuki-Meitei clashes came as a reminder of how fraught the peace is. The other big challenge has been Left-wing extremism (LWE). The MHA can take some credit here too. Data suggests LWE-related violence has declined by 77 per cent, from an all-time high of 2,258 incidents in 2009 to 509 in 2021. The geographical spread of Maoism has also shrunk, with only 46 districts affected in 2021 as compared to 96 in 2010.

Shah's to-do list brims over. The pandemic had put on hold the Census, the update of the National Population Register (NPR), and the rollout of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). J&K awaits electoral normalcy too. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

ARTICLE 370

Annulled in August 2019

Fall in terrorist incidents in J&K

153 (2019)

125 (2022)

No. of tourists who visited J&K in 2022

2.5 MILLION

G20 Tourism Working Group meet in Srinagar, May 2023

BUT...

- **No clear date for J&K polls**
- **No consensus on CAA or NRC**
- **Naga Peace Accord still hanging fire**
- **MHA's mediation couldn't stop violence in Manipur**

STEADY AT THE WHEEL

The FM has run a tight ship through Covid and the war in Ukraine, but sluggish disinvestment and inflation remain significant problems

By M.G. Arun

STORMS TEND TO HAVE NAMES THESE DAYS. After a bit of wavering, this one was named, simply, Covid. A monster that switched off headlights all over the world, the Modi government wasn't even a year into term two when it struck. The health emergency was so acute and all-pervasive that it became, inevitably, the defining economic event of Modi 2.0. The lockdowns shuttered all activity but for those to do with bare existence. The economy plunged into negative growth for two straight quarters in 2020: sector after sector asphyxiated. It was a complex riddle. How to ease the immediate misery? And craft policies to cure India of 'economic long Covid'? Such doom and gloom—an inertia of negative momentum—had every chance of lingering. Could one try rebounding to a better place than status quo ante? The economy, after all, had been sluggish for many pre-Covid quarters.

The Opposition and some economists pressed the Centre to loosen its purse-strings and offer cash relief to citizens, as the US and Europe were doing. Amid massive loss of life and livelihoods, it seemed the self-evident thing to do. But the Modi government went against the tide and chose instead to announce, in May 2020, the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan—encouraging the citizenry to move towards self-reliance. Was that landscape of misery the right time and place to try and awaken the animal spirits of the nation? You could argue back and forth in hindsight, but there was no swaying the Modi regime from its avowed aim of not handing out dole. It decided to put the money—an outlay of Rs 27.1 lakh crore—into bolstering businesses and infrastructure. It preferred money to do some good hard work. Like a life-saving drug with a sustained-release mechanism, having a real cumulative impact on growth, rather than a shallow and

BOLD & BRAVE

₹10 LAKH CRORE

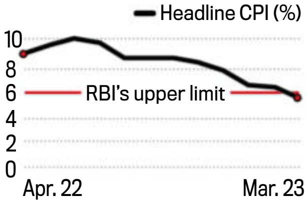
33% Rise in capex in Budget 2023

- Maintains fiscal prudence through pandemic, resists cash doles
- Rolls out PLI scheme for 14 sectors

₹108 LAKH CRORE
5-yr commitment for National Infrastructure Pipeline up to 2025

BUT...

RUNAWAY INFLATION



Inflation breached the RBI-set limit of 6% for 10 months of FY23

₹50,000 cr. divestment target for FY23

30 PER CENT The shortfall

₹35,294 cr. (divestment receipts)

Nirmala Sitharaman
Minister of Finance

Photograph by **BANDEEP SINGH**

> **“THIS SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE (IN CAPEX) IN RECENT YEARS IS CENTRAL TO THE GOVERNMENT’S EFFORTS TO ENHANCE GROWTH POTENTIAL AND JOB CREATION, CROWD IN PRIVATE INVESTMENTS AND PROVIDE A CUSHION AGAINST GLOBAL HEADWINDS”**
>
> **NIRMALA SITHARAMAN**
> *Finance minister, in her Budget 2023 speech*

short-term placebo effect.

Aatmanirbhar Bharat gave businesses tax breaks, introduced production-linked incentives (PLI) in 14 manufacturing sectors and an emergency credit line guarantee for additional credit to micro, small and medium scale enterprises. FM Nirmala Sitharaman kept a laser-focus on capacity-building, earmarking Rs 108 lakh crore between 2019-20 and 2024-25 for the National Infrastructure Pipeline announced in 2019. In October 2021, the Centre repealed the ill-conceived retrospective taxation laws framed by the UPA in 2012.

The biggest credit some economists accord Sitharaman is the fiscal discipline she managed to adhere to through the multiple disruptions. For, scarcely had the world emerged from Covid than Russia invaded Ukraine. Recession was already stalking the West. And inflation began to spook countries that had leant towards cash relief during Covid—the largesse returned to bite them. The US Fed was compelled to raise interest rates to over 5 per cent from near-zero levels. As hot money chased the more attractive dollar, the rupee plummeted, breaching the 80 mark vis-à-vis the dollar on July 22. But at the end of it all, India remains a relatively bright spot—a better GDP growth, which economists expect to be in the region of 7 per cent in FY23, would help.

Approval for the FM’s efforts comes from Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis. “The major achievement of this government has been fiscal prudence,” he says. “The finance ministry has made the budgets work better. It has ensured capital expenditure is made more effectively.” The FM gave capex a Rs 10 lakh crore boost this budget, a massive 33 per cent rise over FY22.

The PLI scheme, too, seems to be bearing fruit, particularly in sectors such as electronics. India is now a key global manufacturing base for iPhones, with Apple’s three contract manufacturers in India—Foxconn, Pegatron and Wistron—assembling iPhones worth Rs 57,390 crore in 2022-23, three times more than 2021-22. All three firms have been extended PLI benefits. Overall production of cellphones has galloped from about 60 million in 2014-15 to around 310 million in 2021-22. The next challenge is to build a local supplier ecosystem, so that handset makers and other electronics firms can source critical components indigenously.

That said, there’s much left to be done. The sale of Air India to the Tata Group and the Rs 20,557.2 crore LIC IPO are saving graces in an otherwise humble balancesheet on the Rs 6 lakh crore divestment and asset monetisation target—just the Rs 1.62 lakh crore target on the latter was missed by a country mile. The much-awaited deal on two PSU banks and a general insurance firm are off the table for now. Private enterprise has not stepped in as hoped for, so the job market stays sluggish. A series of RBI rate hikes has not eased inflation. And the geopolitical flux could mean more pain. ■

4 YEARS OF MODI GOVERNMENT 2.0 › COMMERCE

TAKING INDIA TO THE WORLD

Exports are already at a record high, and new trade agreements could give it a further boost. But a slowing global economy is cause for worry

By M.G. Arun

Photograph by **BANDEEP SINGH**

THE HEADWINDS THAT INDIA'S TRADE and commerce faced over the past four years were unprecedented. While the pandemic gave a big jolt to trade, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 once again created uncertainties around geopolitical stability, a prerequisite for robust trade. However, a host of policies by the Centre—including many that have simplified exim processes—not only helped India keep its head above water but also brought about a phenomenal growth in overall exports.

India's overall exports grew 14 per cent and stood at a record $770 billion-plus (Rs 64 lakh crore) in 2022-23, aided by robust services exports. Meanwhile, merchandise exports grew 6 per cent to $447 billion (Rs 37 lakh crore), which is a new high but lower than what was expected at the start of the last financial year. There was also a 50 per cent rise in exports of electronic goods in 2022-23. India is also emerging as a key supplier of medicines, cars and machine parts, textiles and clothing and food products to Russia. The country is also India's largest supplier of crude oil, ahead of West Asian countries, accounting for 27 per cent of India's crude imports in February 2023, up from just 6 per cent in April 2022. India-Russia trade is estimated to have hit a record $39.8 billion (Rs 3.3 lakh crore) in 2022–23.

Robust exports were a key factor in India's post-Covid recovery—after dipping to $291.8 billion (Rs 24 lakh crore) in 2020-21, merchandise exports rose to $422 billion (Rs 34.8 lakh crore) in 2021-22.

Buoyed by the good performance on the exports front, Piyush Goyal, the Union minister of commerce and industry, on March 31 announced India's new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP), 2023, which outlined an ambitious plan to clock $2 trillion (Rs 165 lakh crore) in exports by 2030. The FTP proposes to shift from an incentives-based regime to a remission and entitlement-based one to achieve this goal. It is based on four pillars: incentive to remission—taxes and levies borne on the exported products should be either exempted or remitted to exporters; export promotion through collaboration; ease of doing business, reduction in transaction cost and e-initiatives and developing districts as export hubs; and streamlining the policy on SCOMET (special chemicals, organisms, materials, equipment and technologies) items.

Goyal said the government will engage in massive trade outreach globally in terms of sectors and nations in the coming months to push exports. India is already pursuing a host of free trade agreements. Following the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement with Australia and the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with the UAE, more negotiations are under way with the European Union, the UK,

Piyush Goyal
Minister of Commerce

BOLD & BRAVE

$770 BILLION

Exports in 2022-23, a rise of 14% over FY22

- **West's protests on India being a 'back door' for Russian oil peter out. Domestic oil refining companies on a high**

- FTAs signed with Australia and UAE

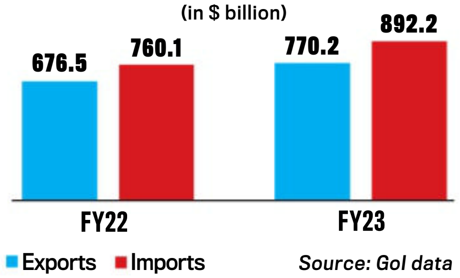
BUT

FDI equity inflows down 22%

FY22 **$58.8 bn**

FY23 **$46 bn**

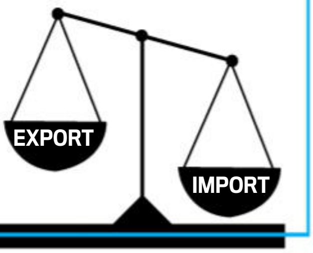
INDIA'S OVERALL TRADE PERFORMANCE
(in $ billion)



Source: GoI data

$122 BILLION

Trade deficit in 2022-23



> "WE CAN ACHIEVE $2 TRILLION IN EXPORTS BY 2030, BUT WE MUST ENSURE THAT MERCHANDISE EXPORTS DON'T FALL BEHIND SERVICES EXPORTS"
>
> **PIYUSH GOYAL**
> Commerce minister while launching FTP, 2023, on Mar. 31

Canada and Israel.

But it will be tough to maintain the momentum in exports. For one, there was pent-up demand for goods and services in 2022, which had helped drive exports up. Now they are already feeling the pressure, with India's merchandise exports dipping by 12.7 per cent year-on-year to $34.7 billion (Rs 2.9 lakh crore) in April this year as compared to $39.7 billion (Rs 3.3 lakh crore) in April 2022. In January this year, the International Monetary Fund said that global growth will slow down from 3.4 per cent in 2022 to 2.9 per cent in 2023 and then rebound to 3.1 per cent in 2024. The impact of continued monetary policy tightening on major economies will also be visible going forward. Expect it to exert additional pressure on exports.

India may feel the heat to some extent as labour-intensive sectors like textiles, footwear and leather depend on exports to the US and Europe, making them particularly vulnerable, as a Crisil report points out. Also, the competitive advantage India enjoys from the rupee's weakening may not hold, as most currencies have been weakening against the dollar anyway. Experts are of the view that, among other steps, the government must focus on enhancing exports in sectors such as machinery, technology and electrical and electronic products that make up 35 per cent of global trade, but where India has a barely one per cent share.

In the immediate future, what's required is lowering logistics costs, as well as increasing liquidity in exports as buyers delay payments amid inventory build-up. Also, India is already doing well in agricultural exports, and the government should retain its sharp focus on the sector, say experts. It needs to work on expanding export prowess to reach the ambitious 2030 target set for itself. ■

GETTY IMAGES

Rajnath Singh
Minister of Defence

A FORCE OF THE FUTURE

Keeping the Chinese at bay, streamlining and modernising the armed forces, fortifying defence infrastructure and building self-reliance...it has been a long and demanding to-do list

By PRADIP R. SAGAR

AN ARMY MARCHES ON its stomach, but its provisions roll along roads. In January 2023, a month after a clash along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between Indian and Chinese troops in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, defence minister Rajnath Singh visited the northeastern state. Using the peppy shorthand for 'brother', he quipped that the BRO (Border Road Organisation) personnel were "brothers of our armed forces". Indeed, the Narendra Modi government has accorded the utmost importance to building border roads. In the past five years, the BRO has constructed over 3,600 km of roads, mostly along the LAC, at an overall cost of Rs 20,767 crore, to facilitate all-weather access to forward areas. With this massive infrastructure push, the Indian military has improved its battle readiness along the China border. Little wonder then that in the Union budget for 2023-24, BRO's capital outlay is Rs 5,000 crore, as against Rs 3,500 crore in 2022-23—a jump of 43 per cent.

In his Independence Day address in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the country's military would have a Chief of Defence Staff—the highest-ranking military officer and chairman of the chief of staffs committee. In December that year, then army chief Gen. Bipin Rawat was named the first CDS. On the new CDS's agenda was the optimum utilisation of scarce resources through the integration of the military capabilities of the three services. However, his plan to create theatre commands for increased combat efficiency, was put on the backburner after his tragic death in December 2021.

From May 2020, a series of border clashes broke out between the Chinese and Indian armed forces along the LAC in Ladakh, as the former attempted incursions at various points

Tejas
RESCUE

like Pangong Tso. In June occurred the violent clash in the Galwan Valley, in which 20 Indian soldiers and an ‘undisclosed’ number of Chinese troops lost their lives. However, it has been alleged by some locals in Ladakh that Indian authorities had ignored steady intrusions by the Chinese despite being repeatedly warned. As the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) of China brought in troops, armour and heavy equipment up to the LAC, Indian military carried out a ‘mirror deployment’—at its height, Indian troop deployment swelled to 50,000, as heavy transport aircraft airdropped equipment and provisions. Since then, multiple rounds of military and diplomatic negotiations have gradually defused tension and led to disengagement and drawback of men and materiel at five out of seven friction points along the LAC in eastern Ladakh. Even during the crisis, the military was helping with logistics to combat the Covid pandemic—from setting up hospitals to flying in oxygen.

In June 2022, the government brought in the radical Agnipath recruitment scheme to build youthful, tech-savvy and future-ready armed forces. Under it, youth would be trained as soldiers, airmen and sailors for four years. It was opposed by those who felt it would lower the efficiency of the military, as well as by many youth, who thought they would be left in the lurch after four years, as the scheme allows for permanent recruitment of only 25 per cent of ‘agniveers’. However, the Centre has promised that Agniveers would be given priority for recruitment in central police forces and Assam Rifles.

Though India is amongst the largest importers of arms, the government is pushing hard to bring ‘self-reliance’ in defence under the Make in India initiative. To boost domestic manufacturing, the MoD embargoed the import of 4,666 military items and weapons systems in 2020. That year, the government allowed FDI under the automatic route (depending on a case to case basis) to go up to 74 per cent (from 49 per cent), and up to 100 per cent through the government route, wherever it would result in access to modern technology. In the past four years, India’s defence manufacturing industry has achieved several milestones. One was the commissioning of the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier INS *Vikrant*—the largest naval ship to be designed and built in India—in September 2022. The other was the Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) Prachand.

Defence exports reached a high of around Rs 16,000 crore in 2022-23. India is exporting military hardware to 85 countries. While India is exporting Dornier-228 planes, 155 mm Advanced Towed Artillery Guns (ATAGs), BrahMos missiles, Akash missile systems and Pinaka rockets, some countries have expressed interest in the LCA (Light Combat Aircraft) Tejas and Prachand. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

▸ **India gets its first CDS in Gen. Bipin Rawat. His untimely death sees Gen. Anil Chauhan take over**

74%
FDI allowed in defence sector through automatic route: 100% via govt route

Agnipath scheme to recruit soldiers for 4 years

BUT...

▸ **Theatrisation of armed forces work in progress**

31
Fighter jet squadrons with IAF, as against authorisation for 42

Our Own Global Outlook

Skillful balancing of national interests with the principle of common global good has been the hallmark of Indian foreign policy in the past four years

By Pradip R. Sagar

SUBRAHMANYAM JAISHANKAR took charge of the ministry of external affairs (MEA) in May 2019; his tenure thus runs parallel to the second term of the Narendra Modi government. Within months of his taking charge, the Centre turned Article 370 into a dead letter and bifurcated the state of Jammu & Kashmir into two Union territories. A storm of protest rose from China and Pakistan, and while many countries supported India's move, many others, including several Islamic countries, UK, Canada and the EU, expressed concerns. As both China and Pakistan attempted to raise the issue at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the former foreign secretary ran a massive campaign, in person during his visits to Europe and the US, and mobilising India's foreign missions elsewhere, to impress upon the international community that New Delhi had Kashmir's best interests in mind and—vitally—that it was an internal matter of India.

That its word carried weight was a measure of its new esteem. The size of India's economy is a factor here, but not a sufficient one. Esteem is an abstract value that has to be generated through a variety of diplomatic means. Take the Covid-19 pandemic. The MEA, partnering with other departments, marshalled resources to help other countries. During the peak of the first wave in 2020, India's medical diplomacy saw it supplying paracetamol and hydroxychloroquine to 120 affected countries. In January 2021, under India's Vaccine Maitri programme, Covid vaccines were sent to countries in dire need of them—till now, around 160 million doses of vaccines have been given to 96 countries.

India's capacity to chart a singular path was nowhere more in view than during the Ukraine conflict, where it created a niche of exceptionalism for itself. Exigencies forced neutrality on India but, with fleet-footed diplomacy, it managed to make a virtue of necessity—taking a balanced view, advocating a cessation of hostilities and a return to dialogue. It abstained from resolutions criticising Russia at the UNSC but balanced this out when PM Narendra Modi told Rus-

BOLD & BRAVE

G20

India assumes presidency for 2023

Quad grouping emerges as an important bulwark against China

160 MILLION Covid vaccine doses supplied to 96 countries till date

BUT...

Upholding India's interests in the face of a Sino-Russian axis and a Western bloc remains a challenge

Photograph by **BANDEEP SINGH**

S. Jaishankar
Minister of External Affairs

sian President Vladimir Putin at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Samarkand in 2022 that "today's era is not of war". Recently, Modi assured Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky at the G7 summit in Hiroshima that India would do "whatever is possible" to find a solution to the conflict. In balancing its principles with its interests and maintaining a balance between the US and Russia—which is an important source of defence and energy—Indian foreign policy has been able to marry its concrete needs with its legacy of non-alignment. This blend of pragmatism and idealism is no hollow ad-hocism, though. If India has displayed a capacity in the past four years to pursue enlightened self-interest against a turbulent geopolitical canvas, its interventions have the common good of all nations in mind.

A grittier reality has confronted New Delhi along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), with the Indian army and the belligerent Chinese engaged in a protracted stand-off in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh since the Galwan clash of 2020. Jaishankar has stated that bilateral ties with China had entered a "challenging and abnormal" phase and would not normalise unless all outstanding border issues are resolved. Multiple rounds of military as well as diplomatic dialogue with Beijing have brought disengagement and prevented further clashes, though with some tactical and territorial compromises. India's response has been to amp up its presence in the revived Quadrilateral Dialogue or Quad, where it partners the US, Japan and Australia. An important bulwark against Beijing, the Quad is key to containing its ambitions in the Indo-Pacific. Over the past four years, there have been three in-person Quad leaders' meeting; the latest one, on the sidelines of the G7 summit in May, reiterated the importance of a "free and open international rules-based order". The India-US strategic partnership has value that overrides domestic politics—Joe Biden, who took charge in January 2021, backs it as much as Donald Trump did.

Closer home, the 'Neighbourhood First' policy has remained a pillar of Indian diplomacy. In the past four years, India has delivered humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and, as a creditor, supported debt restructuring for crisis-hit Sri Lanka. Ties with Bangladesh, Maldives and Myanmar remain strong, while relations with Nepal are back on track. India's stand on ties with Pakistan remains unchanged—that any outstanding issue must be resolved in a terror-free environment. Further afield, Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have been a key instrument to obtain better market access for India's exports. New Delhi has signed several such pacts—with Mauritius (2021), the UAE (2022) and the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement with Australia (2022). FTA negotiations with the UK and EU are in progress. Hosting the SCO summit in 2023 as its president will be a great opportunity to reach out to Central Asian nations.

Finally, India has assumed presidency of the G20 for 2023. As the leading voice of the Global South, it aims to incorporate the aspirations of smaller/developing nations into the G20 agenda. The finance ministers, central bank governors and foreign ministers have met. The heads of state summit in September will freeze-frame India's presence at the global high table. ■

> "WE ARE ASKED WHOSE SIDE WE ARE ON. OUR ANSWER...IS STRAIGHT AND HONEST. INDIA IS ON THE SIDE OF PEACE AND WILL REMAIN FIRMLY THERE"
>
> **S. JAISHANKAR**
> at the UN General Assembly on September 24, 2022

FUTURE OF SKILLING
73

Dharmendra Pradhan
Minister of Education

SETTING A NEW COURSE

Having risen to the challenge of switching to online learning during Covid, the ministry is hard focusing on implementing the National Education Policy of 2020

By Kaushik Deka

EDUCATION FACED ITS BIGGEST TEST ever when Covid-19 crept up on humanity with little warning. The transition to online learning had to take place almost overnight. India rose to the challenge commendably, given the enormity of the crisis. However, as it emerged on the other side of the pandemic, it found that the virus had taken a toll in more ways than one. The learning gap, for instance. The 2021 edition of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2021, published by the NGO Pratham, found that children's foundational reading and arithmetic levels had dropped

ANI

substantially between 2018 and 2021. Economic disparity had widened that gap—those who had access to technology moved ahead, while students from underprivileged backgrounds fell behind. All of which made the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP), announced in 2020, even more urgent. The education ministry says the new curriculum framework will be ready by next year. The government's attempts to 'rationalise' course content, meanwhile, has sparked widespread furore.

But that isn't where the challenge lies. The bugbear is in the execution. While budgetary allocation for the ministry has jumped by more than Rs 8,000 crore or 8 per cent over the previous year, core to NEP's implementation are the country's teachers and we just don't have enough trained teachers. That truth was reiterated in a recent report of a parliamentary standing committee, which stated that more than 980,000 teaching positions out of the over 6.2 million sanctioned posts lie unfilled in state government schools in India. And we are not even talking of proxy teachers. Worse, over 740,000, or 75 per cent, of these vacancies are at the elementary level (Classes 1 to 8), which is key to the foundational learning of students. The committee had other depressing findings—258 Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) do not have permanent buildings and are functioning out of temporary accommodations. The committee, in fact, urged the ministry to persuade the state governments to provide land for the KVs. The PM Poshan scheme, earlier known as the mid-day meal scheme, is also facing slow starvation—no independent assessment has been carried out between 2020 and 2023. And what we do not know, we cannot amend.

In fact, education being a state subject, Centre-state conflicts have often derailed certain projects. The ministry's plans to upgrade 14,500 government schools across the country under its flagship Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM-SHRI) scheme at a cost of Rs 27,360 crore over five years is one such instance. The standing committee report found that eight non-BJP ruled states—Bihar, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal—have still not signed an agreement with the Union government for PM-SHRI schools.

The higher education sector has seen some movement, primarily the introduction of a common university entrance test (CUET) for college admissions, as well as the system of academic credit, under which post-graduates can pursue doctorates, without the earlier mandatory requirement to teach in central universities. Autonomous colleges are now allowed to offer online degrees and foreign universities have been given guidelines if they want to set up a campus in India. While most of these steps are in sync with the NEP, here too the crisis lies in finding manpower—more than 6,000 teaching posts lie vacant in central universities. Other things await action too. Like freeing the National Assessment and Accreditation Council from allegations of malpractices. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

- **Launched National Education Policy, 2020**
- **Introduced CUET or the common university entrance test for college admissions**

6
YEARS

Minimum age fixed for admission to Class 1

BUT...

VACANCY

980,000

out of the 6.2+ million sanctioned posts for teachers lie unfilled in govt schools; 6,000 in central universities

- **Expenditure on education far short of NEP target of 6 per cent of GDP**

258

KENDRIYA VIDYALAYAS

do not have permanent buildings and are running out of temporary accommodations

HIGH ON HIGHWAYS

Consistency and enduring zeal have been the hallmark of Nitin Gadkari's helmsmanship of the ministry, making it among the best performers

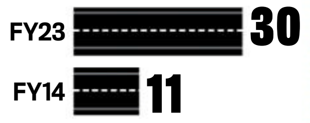
By Anilesh S. Mahajan

Nitin Gadkari

Minister of Road Transport & Highways

Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

BOLD & BRAVE



Highway Building Speed (km/day)

11 Greenfield expressways under construction

BHARATMALA
ROAD TO PROSPERITY

2,560 KM
Length of 6 more expressways planned under BharatMala-II

BUT...

Acquisition Pangs

1,457 CASES
against land compensation, awaiting govt response, in high courts

IN A RECENT INTERNAL COMMUNICATION TO HIS OFFICIALS, Nitin Gadkari, the Union minister of road transport and highways, set an ambitious target for them: to construct 60 kilometres of highways every day. It's an uphill task, considering that in FY23, just over 30 km of highways were built on an average daily. The total length of highways thus laid stood at 10,993 km, falling short by 13.7 per cent of the fiscal's target to add 12,500 km.

But Gadkari, who has been at the helm of the ministry since the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power at the Centre in May 2014, is known as a tough taskmaster—setting onerous targets and pushing his officials hard to achieve them. And it is this very trait that has helped him speed up the construction of highways, the lifelines of India's economy.

In fact, Gadkari is perhaps the only minister in Modi Government 2.0 who continues to lead his ministry with the same zeal and consistency he displayed in the first term in the job. When he assumed office, the rot of corporate scams, 'overstretched' balance sheets and a mounting pile of breached contracts had not only slowed down the construction of highways, but also put the country's financial institutions at risk. The then chief economic advisor, Arvind Subramanian, described the situation as a twin balance sheet problem—wherein companies were overleveraged and banks saddled with bad loans. To put things into perspective, we just need to look at the pace of highway construction in 2013-14—just 11 km daily. By the time the parliamentary elections were held in 2019, the speed had accelerated to 20 km per day, and touched 37 km a day in FY21 amid the Covid-induced lockdowns.

Along with expanding the existing highway network, the ministry is also pushing the construction of greenfield expressways—six to 12-lane controlled-access highways for high-speed travel. At present, work is underway on 11 expressways, including the 1,350-km Delhi-Mumbai, 701-km Mumbai-Nagpur, 650-km Delhi-Amritsar-Katra, 465-km Raipur-Visakhapatnam and 594-km Ganga expressway, the last of which will connect Meerut and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh. These are in addition to six key expressways—totalling 2,560 km road length—to come up under the second phase of BharatMala projects. Count among them the 745-km Pune-Bengaluru expressway, which will provide the longest expressway link via the Delhi-Mumbai corridor, and the 515-km Indore-Mumbai expressway that too will connect to the upcoming Delhi-Mumbai expressway.

KNOWN FOR HIS PLAIN TALK, GADKARI SUCCEEDS IN GETTING THE WORK DONE EVEN IN STATES RULED BY OPPOSITION PARTIES

Amid these ambitious plans and targets, hurdles in land acquisition remain a major headache for the ministry. As Gadkari told Parliament in February this year, 1,457 cases pertaining to objections to the government-announced compensation for land acquisition were pending in various high courts, wherein the Centre or the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) were yet to file a response.

But Gadkari, known for his plain talk and no-nonsense approach, does succeed in getting the work done, even in states ruled by opposition parties. His influence may have waned within the BJP after he was removed from the party's central election committee and parliamentary board—its top decision-making bodies—but Gadkari's performance as the road transport and highways minister sets him apart from his cabinet colleagues. Now, as India readies to make a transition to cleaner fuel technologies for transport, including vehicles running on hybrid fuel and ultimately electric mobility, Gadkari's experience and business-oriented approach will definitely come in handy. ■

QUIET DOER

Since taking charge of the railways ministry two years ago, Vaishnaw has been busy removing bottlenecks to speed up reforms

By Anilesh S. Mahajan

IN JULY 2021, WHEN PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI hand-picked Ashwini Vaishnaw, a former IAS officer, to head the railways ministry, the brief given to him was very clear—not only did he have to eliminate the bottlenecks that were hindering reforms, but also ensure that change was visible on the ground. Vaishnaw wasted no time in putting the new and faster Vande Bharat trains on track and kickstarting the makeover of India's railway stations. The plan to let private players run trains—championed by his predecessors Suresh Prabhu and Piyush Goyal—was given a quiet burial, with Vaishnaw pushing for private money to be put into creating capital goods for the national transporter.

"We are building an enabling environment for collaborations and partnerships...to strengthen our capabilities," Vaishnaw told INDIA TODAY. "Private capital is welcome [in that field]." The minister said that work is in progress to make railways "more efficient, more comfortable for the consumer and aligned to modern technology". And the indigenously developed and manufactured semi-high-speed Vande Bharat Express trains are central to this plan, spreading their network at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of bullet trains is yet to get off the track. Since flagging off the first Vande Bharat train between Delhi and Varanasi just ahead of the parliamentary election in 2019, 19 more have been added to the railways' roster, and another 67 are expected to chug off in FY24.

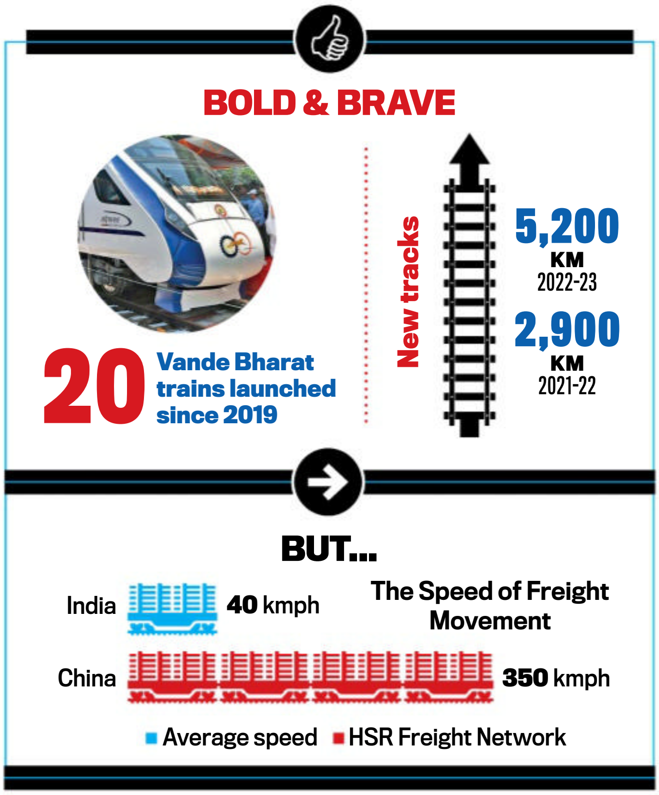
Things aren't going perhaps as fast

> "I AM NEW TO POLITICS. BUT I HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF RAILWAYS AND TECHNOLOGY. I STICK TO WHAT I KNOW THE BEST AND TRY TO DELIVER"
>
> **ASHWINI VAISHNAW**
> *Union railways minister*

Ashwini Vaishnaw

Minister of Railways

ANI



as Vaishnaw had hoped they would, given the ambitious target to make 400 Vande Bharat trains operational by FY26 to provide a more comfortable journey than on the premium Rajdhani and Shatabdi Express trains. The existing Vande Bharat train-sets are chair cars used for 7-8 hour journeys. Prototypes are now being prepared to manufacture sleeper coaches as well. And the response has been encouraging. Minutes after the sale of tickets began for the latest Delhi-Dehradun Vande Bharat Express on May 27, it was booked to capacity for the first three days.

To meet the requirement of the ever-expanding railway network, the ministry is also adding new tracks at an unprecedented pace. An impressive 5,200 km of new tracks were laid in FY23, up from 2,900 km in FY22. “It’s like adding the railway network of Switzerland in just a year,” the minister is quick to add.

For years, the soft-spoken Vaishnaw had been assisting Modi from behind the scenes with inputs for reforms across sectors. Now, in the thick of things, he has used his sector-specific knowledge as well as communication skills to remove the most complex bottlenecks. The augmentation of the railways’ capacity during the power crisis in March last year is a case in point. “I am new to politics,” admits Vaishnaw. “But I have an understanding of railways and technology. I stick to what I know the best and try to deliver.”

Among the various reforms, the ministry is deploying the indigenously developed automatic train protection system Kavach, redeveloping 1,275 railway stations, building the capacity to manufacture more efficient locomotives and coaches, and accelerating the execution of Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs). Since the inaugural train was flagged off on the DFC in December 2020, about 80 per cent of the tracks on both the Western and Eastern corridors have become operational, recording over 100,000 freight train journeys.

Segregating the slower freight trains to these dedicated greenfield tracks is allowing the railways to ensure a smoother journey on passenger trains and enhance freight train speeds. Figures on Statista show the average freight train speed in India at 23-24 km per hour in 2000-2020. It went up to 40 km per hour between 2020 and 2023. Though still no match for China’s freight trains, which run at 350 km per hour on its high-speed rail network, Vaishnaw believes the Indian Railways is on the right track. ■

FLIGHT CAPTAIN

The ministry has had to play facilitator rather than regulator for an aviation sector hit by inclement conditions

By Kaushik Deka

GETTY IMAGES

Jyotiraditya Scindia
Minister of Civil Aviation

THE LAST THREE YEARS were riddled with disruptions because of two major global crises—first, the Covid-19 pandemic, and then the Ukraine-Russia war. In terms of their economic impact, the aviation sector has been among the worst-hit. Add to that a falling rupee and the increase in aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices, and airlines in India bled heavily, with Go First going bust in May, four years after Jet Airways met a similar fate.

As the combined losses of the industry kept mounting, the Union ministry of civil aviation had to play the role of a facilitator, and not just a regulator. Led by the dapper Jyotiraditya Scindia, the ministry convinced 19 states and UTs to reduce the value-added tax (VAT) on ATF. The goods and services tax (GST) has also been reduced from 18 per cent to 5 per cent for domestic maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) services.

The expansion of airports has continued, with 11 greenfield airports operationalised since 2019. The Udan (or Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) scheme, announced in 2016, to enhance regional air connectivity and make air travel affordable, has also shown impressive growth. Since 2019, 38 airports have become operational under the scheme. In all, the network has expanded to 459 routes connecting 72 airports, including nine heliports and two water aerodromes, in Tier 2 and 3 cities, as on January 30. Add to it 58 airports covered under Krishi Udan, meant for the transportation of perishables and agricultural produce, since its launch in 2020.

That said, recognising the drone technology's economic and strategic importance, the Union government has also liberalised the drone policy, incentivised the manufacturing of drones and their components and is working on establishing international partnerships for exporting drones to friendly countries. According to industry estimates, over 100,000 drone pilots will be required in the next three years. The DGCA has already approved 48 drone training schools.

The civil aviation ministry is also focusing on increasing flying training organisations (FTOs) and enhancing facilities for aircraft MRO in India. In 2022, the DGCA issued 1,061 commercial pilot licences, the highest for any year in the past decade.

What India now needs to do is leverage its airports and become a global hub like Qatar, Singapore and Dubai. The ministry must also facilitate an economic environment where air travel remains affordable for passengers as well as viable for the airlines. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

AIR INDIA
SOLD

Air India returns to original promoters, the Tata Group

72 AIRPORTS | **459** ROUTES

(as on Jan. 30, 2023)

BUT...

India must leverage its airports to become hub like Qatar, Singapore and Dubai

WE WANT 'BANK OF BARODA RASHTRABHASHA SAMMAN' TO BE A NATIONAL INSTITUTION

Bank of Baroda (Bank), one of India's leading public sector banks, announced the long-list of 12 Novels, nominated for the first edition of the 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman' Award 2023. The unique award has been instituted to recognize and promote literary works in various Indian languages as well as to make the best Indian literature available to Hindi readers through translations.

Speaking to India Today, **Mr. Sanjiv Chadha, Managing Director & CEO, Bank of Baroda** said "India is a diverse country – a melting pot of cultures, religions and languages. And in its diversity lies its strength and distinctiveness. We believe that the promotion of literature across Indian languages helps strengthen our multiculturalism."

What is the rationale of BoB constituting such an award?

As you are aware, our Bank was founded on 20th July 1908 by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III – one of the greatest patrons of arts, music, literature and performing arts. He founded several cultural and educational institutions besides being a great collector of classical Indian painters like Raja Ravi Varma. So, the inspiration to promote art and literature is ingrained in the Bank's DNA.

The Bank has been part of several acclaimed art and cultural festivals such as Prithvi and Kala Ghoda Arts Festival in Mumbai among others. In the literary arena, we have been associated with the Jaipur Literature Festival. So, we want to extend this mission of promoting India's rich cultural heritage by supporting our language literature in line with our progress as a nation. The 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman' will now be an integral part of Indian language and literature promotion.

Does 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman' mean promotion of Hindi language and literature?

Let me explain few aspects of about the national language or Rashtra Bhasha and State languages or Rajya Bhasha of India. The Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution lists 22 languages, known as scheduled languages with due recognition, status and official encouragement. Some of them are known as classical languages for their rich heritage and independent nature. Thus, these are all national languages or Rashtra Bhashas while the official language is Hindi.

Thus, this award intends to respect, promote and advance all our national languages by promoting literary works, originally written in them, and also by translating them into Hindi. So, the award will be presented to both the original author of the selected novel and the translator who has translated the book to Hindi from the original regional languages. We have received entries from Hindi translators as well as publishers. This way, we believe all languages are treated equally and with due respect.

How does it help writers in Indian languages other than Hindi?

The award promotes the mutual interchange amongst Indian languages and seeks to make the best Indian literary works available to a very large appreciative audience. Moreover, it gives a national platform to talented Indian writers from different parts of the country and will give a boost to Indian language literature as well as encourage literary translations.

The original author of a novel and the Hindi translator of the same will be honoured with awards that carry ₹21.00 lakh and ₹15.00 lakh respectively. In addition to this, authors and Hindi translators of the next five shortlisted works will also be recognised and be given ₹3.00 lakh and ₹2.00 lakh respectively. We believe that this is perhaps the highest prize money for a literary award since it is our desire to support all those talented writers to feel rewarded and appreciated by the people of India.

Who decides the winners? Can you throw some light on the jury?

Since this is a recognition of national significance with much interest across our national languages, we wanted to ensure very high credibility in the selection of these works. We have an elite jury of eminent literary personalities, headed by none other than the Booker Prize winner, Smt. Geetanjali Shree. The other four jury members are Mr. Arun Kamal, an Indian poet; Mr. Pushpesh Pant, an academic and historian; Ms. Anamika, a contemporary Indian poet and novelist; and Mr. Prabhat Ranjan, a Hindi fiction writer and translator. We believe this could be the most distinguished jury that could be put together at the moment.

When will you announce the winners? What's the process ahead?

We have announced the long-list of 12 Novels, nominated for the first edition of the 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman' Award 2023 this week. The Bank had initiated the process of inviting nominations during the period March-April 2023 and received several entries written in different Indian languages, from which the jury has prepared a long-list of 12 books. From this list, the jury will select the winner and five other runners-up who will be honoured. The winner of the Award will be announced on 11th June, 2023 in Delhi.

राष्ट्र की भाषाएँ, राष्ट्र की धरोहर.

What is the way forward for the award?

With the co-operation of all art and literature lovers across India, we believe we can make this a national institution, coveted for its prestige and literary eminence.

How does this help the Bank in terms of core activities?

No doubt, the key objective is to enrich our national languages by nurturing our writers in line with the tradition of our founder. But from the core banking perspective, we understand the importance of all our languages for our customers who find extreme comfort in conversing or engaging with the bank in respective languages. As you are aware, around 93% of the calls to our call centres are in national languages which proved instrumental in enhancing our financial inclusion efforts. Now, from the future perspective, the Bank is aware of the need to develop technology and utilize the power of the local languages for a greater engagement with our growing customer base.

अभिप्रेत काल
பொய் முகம்
چینی کوٹھی
नेमत ख़ाना
திறக்காத ஜன்னல்கள்
महानदी
फातसुङ
মনোরঞ্জন ব্যাপারী
ঘর পালানো ছেলে

GETTY IMAGES

Sarbananda Sonowal
Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways

A LONG HAUL

The numbers look promising, but the task to take India into the big league in global shipping remains

By Kaushik Deka

INDIA'S MAJOR PORTS HANDLED a record 795 million tonnes of cargo in FY23, registering a 10 per cent year-on-year growth. The Union government's flagship SagarMala programme has played a key role in strengthening the port infrastructure and trade efficiency, harnessing India's 7,500 km coastline, 14,500 km potentially navigable waterways and strategic location on key international maritime trade routes.

Under the programme, 802 projects worth Rs 5.4 lakh crore are to be completed by 2035. Of these, 221 projects worth Rs 1.12 lakh crore have been completed while the remaining 581 are under various stages of implementation. But Sarbananda Sonowal, who is at the helm of the ministry since July 2021, still faces the challenge to take India to the big league in global shipping.

Nearly 95 per cent of India's overseas trade by volume is carried out via its ports. Yet, India accounts for just over 10 per cent of the global deadweight tonnage. The reasons are aplenty: the lack of a robust local ship-building ecosystem, non-availability of new technology alternatives or retrofitting options, and the age profile of the merchant shipping fleet (most vessels are around 20 years vintage). To make amends, the government has approved a scheme under Aatmanirbhar Bharat to provide Rs 1,624 crore over a period of five years to make Indian shipping companies globally competitive.

By 2030, the government also envisions a three-fold increase in inland waterway transport—an eco-friendly and cheaper option to supplement the overburdened railways and congested roads. To facilitate the ease of doing business, the Inland Vessels Act, 2021, has been passed, replacing an over 100-year-old law. Inland waterways also handled 126 million tonnes of cargo in 2022-23, a 16 per cent jump from last fiscal.

The next focus is on green shipping. To meet the zero carbon emission goal, the ministry has launched 'Harit Sagar', the Green Port Guidelines, in May 2023. The ministry is also working on a Rs 5,000 crore package to facilitate the construction of vessels for inland waterways under the Make in India initiative. It will help decarbonise the sector by introducing alternative fuel technologies for vessels. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

₹1.12 LAKH CRORE

Worth of 221 SagarMala projects completed to strengthen port infra and trade efficiency

Indian Vessels Act, 2021, passed to promote transportation and trade via inland waterways

BUT...

95%

Overseas trade by volume via India's ports. Yet...

10 PER CENT

India's share in global deadweight tonnage

The Crude Reality

Cheaper crude oil imports from Russia have been a relief, but India has to step up domestic production

By M.G. Arun

Hardeep Singh Puri

Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas

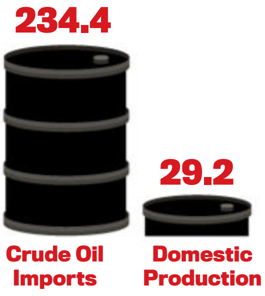
Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

BOLD & BRAVE

1.68
MILLION BARRELS

Crude oil imported this April from Russia, now India's biggest supplier, despite West threatening sanctions

BUT...



Figures in million tonne for FY23

THE OIL-GUZZLING NATION that we are, India saw its crude oil imports rise to 232.4 million tonnes in 2022-23, a 9.4 per cent year-on-year growth. In value terms, the imports, which help meet over 80 per cent of the country's crude oil requirement, stood at $158.3 billion (Rs 13 lakh crore), a 31 per cent y-o-y rise.

Amid the protracted Russia-Ukraine war, crude oil prices have remained volatile, ranging between $75 and $130 a barrel through the year. But with the Union government striking deals with Russia to import oil at discounted rates, despite the West threatening sanctions, Russia has replaced Saudi Arabia as India's largest crude oil supplier in recent months. The ongoing war is also creating opportunities for Indian refiners. As the European Union stopped imports of petroleum products from Russia, Indian refiners have stepped in to fill the void. India exported petroleum products worth $86.21 billion (Rs 7 lakh crore) during the first 11 months of FY23, accounting for more than 21 per cent of our total commodity exports.

Though international crude oil prices have fallen since the highs recorded just after the war began, petrol is still selling for over Rs 100 a litre in several parts of the country. This makes the job of Hardeep Singh Puri, the Union minister for petroleum and natural gas, a lot tougher, as high fuel prices have been a major contributor to rising inflation.

Domestic consumption of petroleum products in FY23 rose over 10 per cent y-o-y to a record 222.3 million tonnes. This, even as the country produced only 29.2 million tonnes of crude in the fiscal, a 1.7 per cent y-o-y decline. This points to the need to improve self-sufficiency in oil. But attracting private investment is a challenge. In fact, the government had to extend the bid submission period for 10 oil and gas blocks under the eighth round of the Open Acreage Licensing Programme for international competitive bidding multiple times to March 30 this year. As an incentive, exploration and production companies have been allowed to sell crude oil produced by them to any company within the country, including PSU refiners. ■

R.K. SINGH
Minister of Power

GETTY IMAGES

Picking Up Steam

Criticised for electricity woes last summer, the power ministry left nothing to chance this year

By Anilesh S. Mahajan

POWER MINISTER R.K. Singh can breathe easy this summer with the weather gods showing some mercy. But things weren't so breezy last year, when demand surged in the extraordinarily hot March and touched 128.47 billion units (BU). It ended up putting to test the entire energy chain, with Singh coming in for criticism for not being able to predict the demand surging on the back of an early summer and an economy recovering after Covid-19. The effects were far-reaching, with several parts of the country facing load shedding for 12 to 16 hours.

Learning from that experience, the power ministry pulled up its socks this year. Estimating peak power demand in the country to touch 230 GW this summer, the ministry instructed power utilities to undertake maintenance for coal-based power plants well in advance to avoid disruptions during the peak summer months of April and May. It also told all imported coal-based plants that they would have to run at full capacity from March 16 to June 15. Additionally, all thermal plants were asked to stock their piles in a timely manner. As a result, of the 165 domestic coal-based thermal power plants in the country, only 28 had critical stocks as on May 25, against about 90 the same time last year (coal stocks are said to be at a critical level when power plants have less than 25 per cent of what would be needed for 26 days of production).

However, key reforms remain in limbo and must be fast-tracked. Though Singh managed to get Parliament's nod on the Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act last year—paving the way for use of non-fossil sources, establishing carbon markets in the country, and bringing large residential buildings within the ambit of the energy conservation regime—he has made little headway with states and labour unions in reaching a consensus on amendments to the Electricity Act, 2003. A bill was tabled in August last year, only to be referred to a standing committee again. The proposed amendments will enhance healthy competition at the distribution level and allow states to have multiple distribution companies (discoms). They also seek to relook the composition of state regulators and the appointment of regulators. Coupled with changes being considered in the National Tariff Policy, such as release of subsidies and direct benefit transfers, the reform will hopefully push states to further discipline the power sector and cut down their losses. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

Only 28 of 165 coal-based thermal plants were on critical stocks this May, against 90-odd last year

BUT...

₹6.2 LAKH CRORE
Discom debt in FY22

24%

₹5.02 LAKH CRORE
Debt in FY20

Coal Comfort

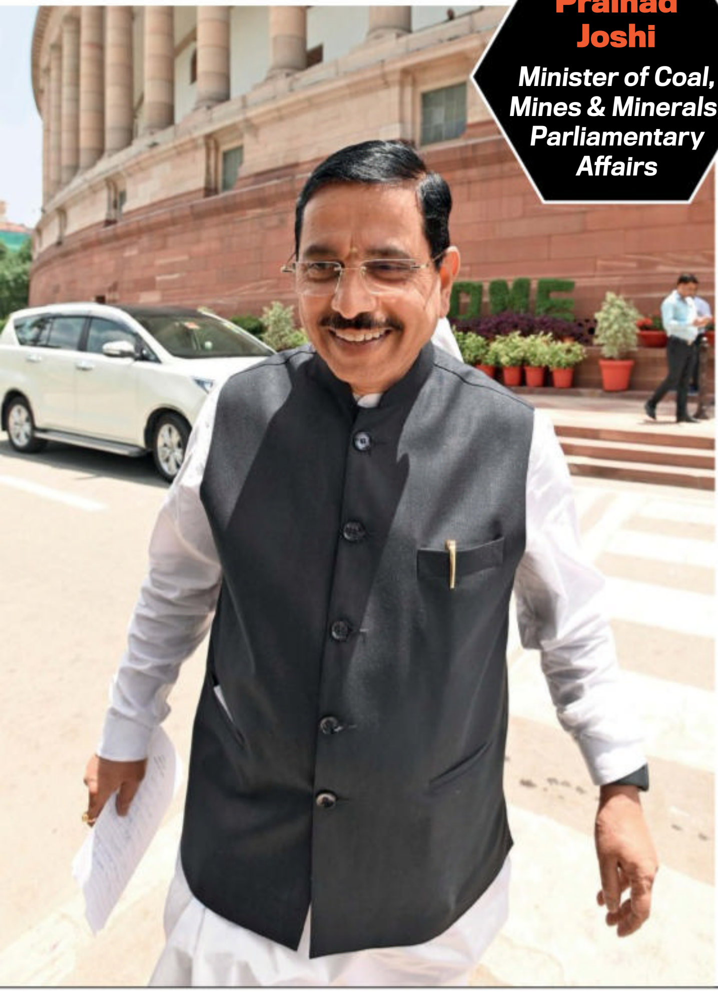
After the scare last year, coal production and supply have stabilised; liberalisation has removed the key bottlenecks

By Anilesh S. Mahajan

T**THIS RAIN-SPLATTERED SUMMER,** coal, mines & minerals minister Pralhad Joshi could afford to be a bit relaxed. In 2022, demand for electricity peaked in March-April, straining the entire energy vertical. Since then, Joshi has been at the root of the supply chain—sourcing more coal and having it delivered to power plants across the country. Around 95 out of 165 thermal power plants in the country ran out of critical coal stock last April-May, and Joshi had to source 66.2 MT (million tonnes) coal from private as well as public sector mines. This year, he had planned for adequate coal stocks much in advance. In FY23, India's coal production was 893.08 MT (a 14 per cent rise from 778.21 MT produced in 2021-22), out of which 770.35 MT came from the state-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) and Singareni Collieries Co. Ltd, and the rest from private miners. In the past one year, Joshi concentrated on developing new mines and improving evacuation facilities in existing mines.

In 2015, coal mining policy had gone through change after the Coal Mines Special Provisions Act (CMSP) was passed. Joshi has pushed for commercial mining and, in 2021, he helped liberalise mining laws, allowing states to hold auctions and retain royalties earned. However, despite the liberalised policy, poor land laws, lower demand for coal, export restrictions and the dominating presence of CIL still plague private miners. In March 2023, India launched the seventh round of auctions for commercial mining, putting 106 mines on sale. In the past three years, 87 mines were auctioned in the first six tranches. Joshi has plans to take coal production to 1.01 BT, where private miners will produce around 162 MT. Politically, Joshi is close to both PM Modi, home minister Amit Shah as well as RSS general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale. A BJP strategist and poll manager, his skills as parliamentary affairs minister are tested at every session, especially when Opposition parties sharply criticise proposed laws and policies and his own party wants crucial legislation to be passed. ■

GETTY IMAGES

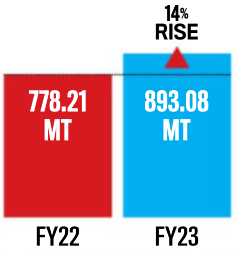


Pralhad Joshi

Minister of Coal, Mines & Minerals, Parliamentary Affairs

BOLD & BRAVE

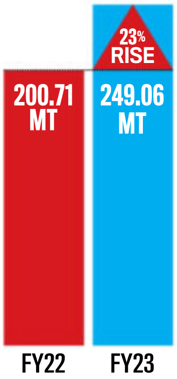
India's coal production



- **Mining laws for coal & minerals reformed**
- **Private investment allowed in mining sector**

BUT...

India's coal imports



राष्ट्रीय
रामायण
महोत्सव
1-3 जून, रायगढ़, छत्तीसगढ़

DISCOVERY OF FOOTPRINTS OF RAM IN CHHATTISGARH

Ram, not just a name here... is a symbol of faith, belief, devotion, affinity, courage, strength, dignity and self-respect. Along with the name of Ram, many glimpses of his personality are also seen in the people here. This is the birthplace of Mata Kaushalya and the 'Nanihal' maternal home of Shri Ram.

This is Chhattisgarh, which was known as 'Dakshina Kosala' in the Ramayana era. Mata Kaushalya's father Sukaushal was the king of this region. Due to this, even today the people of Chhattisgarh consider Lord Shri Ram as their 'nephew' and worship him in this form.

Keeping in view the unwavering faith in 'Ram' in the people here, the state government is developing the 2226 kilometer long Ram Van Gaman Tourism Circuit. A series of tourist pilgrimages are being developed here for those who have faith in Ram. In this episode, to spread the story of Ramayana, the first ever 'National Ramayana Festival' is going to be organized here in Raamleela Maidan of Raigarh district.

SITAMARHI- HARCHAUKA

In the north of Dakshina Kosala, this land became holy by the feet of Lord Shri Ram on the banks of Mawai river. Sitamarhi near Bharatpur in the newly formed Manendragarh Bharatpur Chirmiri district - Harchauka is considered to be the first stop of Ram ji's exile period in Chhattisgarh. There are 17 chambers in the caves on the banks of the river. Twelve Shivlings are installed in these chambers. This place is also famous by the name of Sita's kitchen.

RAMGARH

Ramgiri mountain is mentioned in ancient and historical texts. This Ram Giri mountain situated in Surguja district is now known as Ramgarh hill. The Sitabengra-Jogimara cave theater located near Udaipur is considered to be the oldest theater in the world. Here the rock paintings of prehistoric times are inscribed in the Jogimara cave. Sita ji spent some time here with Ram ji during the exile, hence the name of this cave was 'Sitabengra'.

SHIVRINARAYAN

LOCATED IN JANJGIR-CHAMPA DISTRICT

Shivrinarayan is an ancient town in Chhattisgarh associated with Lord Shri Ram's faith. It is situated on the banks of Tridhara confluence of Mahanadi, Shivnath and Jonk rivers. According to legends, it is believed that this is where Shabari fed her false berries to Lord Shri Ram during the exile.

RAJIM

During his exile, Lord Shri Ram along with Mata Sita and Lakshmana had entered Rajim via Mahanadi route of Arang via Fingeshwar and Champaranya region. Rajim is an ancient town situated at the confluence of Mahanadi, Sondur and Pairi rivers. At that time it was called 'Padmavatipura'. While going to the forest, Ram ji had spent some time in the hermitage of 'Lomash Rishi'. 'Sita Vatika' is also located at this place. It is said that Mata Sita created this garden during her stay. Natural caves located

> "
>
> The Government of Chhattisgarh is fully dedicated to the protection and promotion of the state's rich cultural and religious heritage. Shri Ram and Ramayana hold an integral place in our culture. In line with its ongoing efforts to preserve our heritage and strengthen our connection with Shriram, the state government has undertaken the renovation of the temple dedicated to Mata Kaushalya. Additionally, the annual Kaushalya Mahotsav is being celebrated. Along with this, the state government is also doing the work of developing the places related to Lord Shri Ram's journey as spiritual tourism spots and recognizing them as 'Ram Van Gaman Path'
>
> — ***Bhupesh Baghel Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh***

here. There is a Shivling, which is known as Kuleshwar Mahadev. According to legends, Lord Shri Ram had built these Shivlings from sand to worship Lord Shiva.

TURTURIYA

Turturiya is a small village located near Balukini mountain surrounded by dense forest area in Balodabazar district, 15 km from Kasdol on Ram Vanagaman Marg. According to legend, Maharishi Valmiki's ashram was here and it is believed that Turturia is the birthplace of Luv-Kush. Here the water of the river flows through the natural rocks with the sound of Turtur, due to which the place got its name Turturiya.

CHANDKHURI

Lord Shri Ram along with Mata Sita and Lakshman reached Arang-Chandkhuri via Sirpur, the ancient city situated on the banks of Mahanadi. There is Kaushalya Kund and ancient Bageshwar Shiva temple in Arang situated on the banks of Mahanadi. The village Chandkhuri, called Chandrapuri after the name of the Chandravanshiya kings, is situated at a distance of 27 kilometers from the capital Raipur. In this village with 126 ponds, India's only historical temple of Mata Kaushalya is located in the middle of Jalsen pond. The wonderful statue of mother Kaushalya holding son Ramchandra in her lap makes this temple rare and also because of this place, Chhattisgarh is considered to be the "Nanihal" of Lord Shri Ram.

SIHAWA

At a distance of 65 km from Dhamtari is Sihawa, a sacred place surrounded by dense forests and hills. This is the origin of Chhattisgarh's life-giving mythical Mahanadi. Shanta, the daughter of King Dasaratha, became the adopted daughter of King Rompad. Shanta was the sister of Lord Shriram who was married to Shringi Rishi. Shanta Gufa in the mountain next to Shringi Rishi Ashram in Sihawa is still present. *It was due to this relationship of Ramji's sister-brother-in-law with Sihawa, Lord Shri Ram spent most of his exile period in this place. This place was known as Jana Sthan in those days.* Due to the presence of Shringi Rishi's ashram here, it is called Sihawa. It is believed that King Dashrath had called Shringi Rishi from Sihawa to Ayodhya for Putreshti Yagya to get a son from his three queens and in the same Yagya, Mother Kaushalya gave birth to Lord Shri Ram.

JAGDALPUR

While going to the forest, Lord Shri Ram reached Chitrakot from Barsur, the capital of Banasura and from Barsur via Chhote Dongar. Chitrakot is considered to be an important stop of Ram Vanagaman in Bastar region. It is believed that at this place Lord Shiva-Parvati had come from Himgiri mountain to meet Lord Shri Ram. While going to the forest in Dandakaranya, Lord Shri Ram reached Jagdalpur, the main center of Dandakaranya via Chitrakot via Narayanapal to Indravati river route. The 5 kilometer long and 2 kilometer wide huge Dalpat reservoir located here gives the impression of a sea. From Jagdalpur via Geedam, reached Dantewada situated on the banks of river Shankhani and Dankani and then from Dantewada reached Tirathgarh situated on the banks of river Kanger. Here there is an ancient place called Sita Nahani. There is Tirathgarh and Darshani Falls. After spending some time in this picturesque place, reach Kotumbsar which is also known as Koti Maheshwar. It is said that Shri Ram worshiped Lord Shiva here during his exile. Many natural Shivlings are still present inside this cave.

RAMARAM

While visiting the Dandakaranya region, Shri Ram Chandra, on his way to Dakshinapath, reached a place which is known by his name after crossing the river route ahead of Kot Basar via Sukma. The name of this holy place is Ramaram. There is a legend of Shri Ram's footprint on the hill near this. It is also a legend that Shri Ram had worshiped Bhu-Devi here. Ramaram has the famous Chittamittin temple. This is the only place in the whole of Bastar where on the day of Ram Navami, the worship of its Aaradhya Devi is done with great enthusiasm. A huge fair is organized by the local residents on this occasion.

A GLIMPSE OF THE RAMAYANA CONTEXT IS SEEN IN THE ROCK PAINTINGS

A new beginning in taking Ram Katha to the masses through a different medium was made with those rock paintings which are seen in Ongana of Raigarh. There is a folk tradition here that Ramkatha is depicted in the hills of Ongana. Here a person with ten heads is shown fighting with a young man. It is believed that the person with ten heads is Ravana and the person fighting with him is Shri Ram. In this way, the seed of the artistic presentation of Ramkatha, which was planted by the rock painters in Ongna, will now have its special artistic presentation in the form of Ramayana Mahotsav. According to legends, the pictures made in these rock shelters of Ongana hill made thousands of years ago show the influence of Ramayana in the society of that time. The saga of Ramayana is being heard for generations. Its different forms are prevalent in different parts of the country. But the mention of Ramayana context in the form of archaeological remains is rare.

HEAVY INDUSTRIES

GOING GREEN

It is time to phase out the support to electric vehicle makers as sustainable mobility gathers pace

By Anilesh S. Mahajan

Mahendra Nath Pandey
Minister of Heavy Industries

GETTY IMAGES

THERE IS SOME CONFIDENCE in the Mahendra Nath Pandey-led ministry's implementation of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles, or FAME 2. The government has greenlighted their proposal to start phasing out the support extended to electric vehicle manufacturers. From June 1, the existing support of Rs 15,000 per kWh has been reduced to Rs 10,000 per kWh. The maximum cap on subsidy is brought down from 40 per cent to 15 per cent of MRP.

The two phases of FAME—part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan—have already created some base in the electric two-wheeler space; 846,976 units were sold in FY23, 2.5 times more than in the previous fiscal. This is the nodal ministry that is pushing the silent electric mobility movement in the country. The FAME-2 scheme, which started on April 1, 2019 with an outlay of Rs 10,000 crore, will end in March next year. The target is to have 500,000 e-rickshaws, 1 million electric two-wheelers, 35,000 electric four-wheelers, 20,000 hybrid four-wheelers, 7,090 e-buses, along with 2,700 supporting charging stations.

Meanwhile, BHEL along with its consortium partner Titagarh Wagons Ltd in April, got orders to manufacture and supply 80 sleeper Vande Bharat train sets in the next 72 months. This is BHEL's entry into niche train set manufacturing capabilities. ■

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

Wooing the Workforce

Despite a slew of digitisation measures, expanding the jobs market is a daunting challenge

By Amarnath K. Menon

ON THE FACE OF IT, the figures look impressive. The eShram portal of the Bhupender Yadav-led labour ministry has registered a staggering 300 million workforce, about three-fourths of the total estimated unorganised workforce. eShram allows registration in 400 different occupations under 30 broad sectors. It is being integrated with the Skill India portal, enabling workers to avail of the various skilling initiatives.

However, there is little incentive for workers to register on eShram, thanks to the time and income lost in registration, or for employers to push them. The absence of credible and promised social security benefits is another dampener. Also, while Rs 708 crore has been spent to launch the portal, there is no proportional spend on popularising it.

The implementation of the four Labour Codes is another work in progress. They envisage strengthening the protection available to workers, including unorganised ones, in

Bhupender Yadav
Minister of Labour & Employment

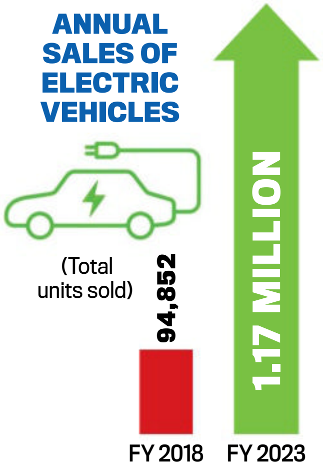
BOLD & BRAVE

5.9 MILLION

No. of insured women who can submit an online claim for maternity benefit on the ESIC portal

BOLD & BRAVE

ANNUAL SALES OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES



BUT...

Hybrid and e-vehicle makers still need subsidies to survive

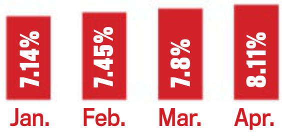
CUT IN SUPPORT
(Per kWh)

₹15,000 Previously

₹10,000 From June 1

BUT...

Unemployment rate rises (2023)



Source: CMIE data

terms of statutory minimum wage, social security and healthcare.

The National Career Service portal, launched in July 2015, acts as a one-stop solution for career-related services, including job search, career counselling, vocational guidance, information on job fairs and skilling programmes, free of cost. In FY23, the platform registered 3.6 million vacancies. ■

ENABLING MOVES

The PLI scheme gives the beleaguered textiles sector timely relief; open digital network promises a level-playing field in e-commerce

By Anilesh S. Mahajan

BOLD & BRAVE

PLI Schemes

PHASE 1

₹10,683 CRORE

Outlay commitment over five years for 64 projects

PHASE 2

₹4,307 CRORE

Projected outlay

Open Network for Digital Commerce, a UPI-like product for e-commerce, launched

BUT...

Performance of Textiles Sector

114.1 Mar. 2022

109.7 Mar. 2023

Index of Industrial Production

FOR THE NEXT PHASE of the production-linked incentive scheme, the Piyush Goyal-led textiles ministry is working out the modalities with a projected outlay of Rs 4,307 crore for manufacturing of garments, made-ups and textiles accessories. In the first phase, 64 projects are in different stages of implementation with an outlay commitment of Rs 10,683 crore over a five-year period. The assistance was to enable these factories to achieve size and scale, and become globally competitive.

The labour-intensive sector is battling increasing labour costs, headwinds in the West, and complexities generated by cheaper imports. Despite plugs like anti-dumping duties on inputs, the industry continues to complain that Chinese players are using the ASEAN FTA to break into Indian markets. The worst impacted are the viscose players, who face challenges from the cheaper imported alternatives. However, India is building the infrastructure to assist its players. This includes the seven PM MITRA (Pradhan Mantri Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel) parks in seven states. Goyal calls the scheme a massive push, which will bring together PM Narendra Modi's conception of 5Fs—farm to fibre, fibre to factory, factory to fashion, and fashion to foreign—in one place.

Piyush Goyal
Minister of Industry, Textiles

In the commerce and industry ministry, Goyal's biggest move has been the setting up of the open network for digital commerce or ONDC. It is marketed as a UPI-like product for e-commerce, allowing small retailers to join it almost for free. Now that the ministry is finalising the draft for the new e-commerce policy, it is expected to eliminate the grey areas to curb foreign-based marketplaces and retailers, and increase acceptability of ONDC among domestic sellers. ■

Giving Them Credit

The sector will need some more hand-holding as it strains to recover from the effects of Covid-19 and the Ukraine war

By M.G. Arun

IF THERE WAS ONE sector that took the hardest hit from Covid-19, it was the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The backbone of the Indian economy, contributing 30 per cent to the GDP and employing over 113 million people, it reportedly saw thousands of units shutting down. Conscious of their plight, thanks to the large-scale migration of out-of-work people back to their homes, the Central government had to prioritise easing MSME woes, helping them financially, besides focusing on skill training and technology upgradation.

Succour came a couple of months after the lockdown in March 2020, when an Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs was announced. As of November 2022, 11.9 million loans had been sanctioned under it, comprising 71 per cent of the Rs 5 lakh crore limit. Also, Union MSME minister Narayan Rane's predecessor, Nitin Gadkari, had already taken three key steps during his term. For one, new classification rules made more units eligible for funding. Then, the manufacturing and services industries were brought on par. Finally, retail and wholesale traders, as also urban street vendors, were brought under the MSME umbrella. Budget 2023 has earmarked Rs 22,138 crore for the sector. The government has also promised to infuse Rs 9,000 crore into the credit guarantee scheme corpus, which will enable additional collateral-free guaranteed credit of Rs 2 lakh crore, with the credit cost reduced by 1 per cent. The turnover limit for micro units for presumptive taxation (where taxpayers have to calculate a percentage of their total revenue and pay taxes on that) has also been expanded from Rs 2 crore to Rs 3 crore.

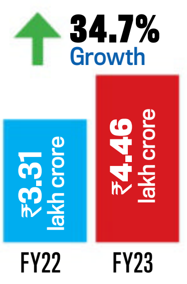
Compliance, however, remains a headache. The sector has for long been demanding a smooth compliance system. The government recently mandated that MSMEs with over Rs 50 crore turnover must generate e-invoices. This can trouble midsize units lacking digital literacy. Some have also demanded a separate GST slab as MSMEs can't compete with big firms. There have also been calls for subsidised loans. A risk to exports, however, remains the largest worry, given geopolitical uncertainties. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

11.9 MILLION

No. of loans sanctioned under Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs, as of Nov. 2022

MUDRA loans to MSMEs



BUT...

WHAT MSMEs WANT

- A simpler compliance structure
- A separate GST slab for MSME products

Narayan Rane
Minister of MSMEs

GETTY IMAGES

INDIA TODAY

BREAKING NEWS

JUST A TAP AWAY

9:41
INDIA TODAY
LIVE
TOP NEWS
VIDEOS
PROGRAMMES
TOP STORIES

LOK SABHA 2019

Narendra Modi Live: By Congress-mukt India we will fulfil Gandhi's dream

PM Narendra Modi was speaking in Lok Sabha

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

AVAILABLE ON

FIELDING QUESTIONS

The ministry has had a tough time pushing reform and achieving its aim of improving farmers' incomes

By Anilesh S. Mahajan

IF THERE IS ONE POLL promise the Narendra Modi government has been unable to deliver on, it is the "doubling of farm incomes". In December 2022, Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar tabled a situation assessment survey report, 'Agricultural Households and Land and Livestock Holding of Households in Rural India, 2019', which says average monthly income of farming households was Rs 10,218. To double real incomes, produce prices had to increase at a rate of over 10 per cent, but they went up only by 2.5 per cent. Getting this done required structural changes, not mere hikes in MSP (minimum support prices), which has been taking place since 2018. The key reasons for this include the lack of storage capacity in the country, and not enough convergence of private processors with growers.

Big-ticket farm reforms had to be reversed in 2020-21 after massive protests by the farm unions. Their intention was to get corporate houses and private procurers

Narendra Tomar
Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare

GETTY IMAGES

₹6,000

Annual minimum income support to 110 million small and marginal farmers

into the farm sector, and ensure wider market access to the farmers. But the unions could not be convinced.

The ministry now seems to be pinning its hopes on digitisation, for which Rs 968 crore has been earmarked, and strengthening of the cooperative and FPO (farmer producer organisation) networks across the country. But these, too, will take time to show results. For instance, the digital agri trading platforms, eNAMs, were launched in 2016, but even now only 1,260 of the 6,900 APMC *mandis* in India are connected.

Money, however, has been flowing to strengthen irrigation facilities, issuing of soil health cards and assured procurement of certain pulses and oilseeds. So far, 230 million soil health cards have been issued. The crop insurance scheme, PM Fasal Bima Yojana, has also been effective—claims worth Rs 1.3 lakh crore have been settled since 2016. Budget allocations have been increasing over the years, but a parliamentary committee in March noted that Tomar's ministry has surrendered Rs 44,016 crore in unspent funds in the past three years. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

₹1 LAKH CRORE

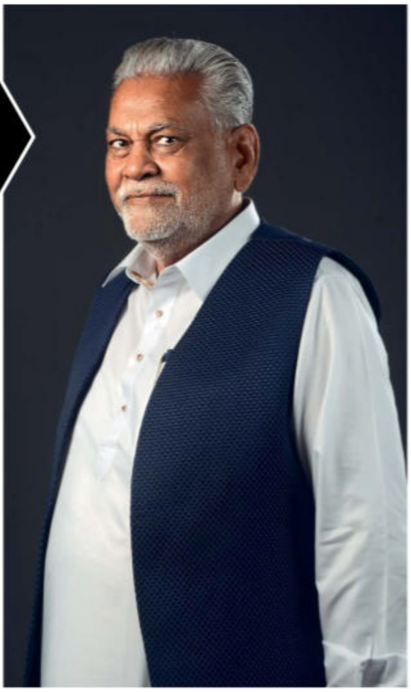
Corpus in Agriculture Infrastructure Fund for loans

BUT...

Only 1,260 of 6,900 APMC mandis in India connected to eNAM

Parshottam Rupala

Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

PRIZE CACHE

Challenges apart, the minister in charge has quite a lot to show for a ministry that is just four years old

By Himanshu Shekhar

ONE OF THE BIGGEST challenges for Parshottam Rupala, who in 2021 took charge of a ministry that was formed just four years ago, came in the form of the lumpy skin disease, which felled thousands of cattle across the country last year. For the world's top milk-producing nation, it was a mega crisis. The ministry, however, managed to stem it swiftly. "We were holding regular meetings with the affected states. We had also set up a control room in the ministry, and vaccination was in full swing," says Rupala about the efforts.

On the fisheries front, the several schemes that the government has launched to boost the sector have resulted in fish production reaching an all-time high of 16.24 million tonnes in FY22; sea-food exports, too, saw record earnings of Rs 57,586 crore that year. The ministry is currently focusing on the Sagar Parikrama Yatra, which is intended to create awareness among fish farmers and coastal communities across India. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

16.2 MILLION TONNES

The record fish production in 2021-22

BUT...

Retail price of milk has risen 12% from a year ago

BHARAT TO THE FORE

When it comes to scheme saturation, work continues apace, but the absence of an implementation model mars all good intentions

By Amarnath K. Menon

CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

Giriraj Singh

Minister of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj

THE INCREASING FOCUS ON rural development has Panchayati Raj institutions in the throes of change. The call for saturation of schemes in the panchayats is making steady progress, though the ministry, headed by Giriraj Singh, is yet to develop a model that helps implement them faster. However, the allocation under the Finance Commission—direct transfer to the panchayat—that was just Rs 54 per person two decades ago is now Rs 700.

Despite rapid urbanisation, the majority of India's population still lives in villages. Women are increasingly essaying a key role. Of the 315,000 elected representatives of rural local bodies, 46 per cent are women. As many as 21 states have reserved 50 per cent seats for women in three-tier panchayats—way beyond the 33 per cent constitutional provision.

About 310,000 elected representatives have been trained in how to make their villages sustainable under the Gram Swaraj Abhiyaan. The parameters for determining the vibrant panchayats have changed to include carbon neutrality, water sufficiency, literacy and employment generation. A positive outcome is the increasing competitiveness among panchayats with more than 90 per cent vying for national awards.

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), a flagship poverty alleviation programme of the Ministry of Rural Development, has its footprints in 6,861 blocks of 723 districts in the country (except Delhi and Chandigarh). It has mobilised 87.1 million women from poor and vulnerable communities into 8.1 million Self Help Groups.

The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-III, launched in 2019, for consolidation of 1.25 lakh km through routes and major rural links connecting habitations to village agricultural markets, higher secondary schools and hospitals has gathered pace in implementation. A total of 162,373 habitations, more than 99 per cent of eligible habitations, have been provided connectivity since the scheme's inception.

BOLD & BRAVE

40 PER CENT
Share of women in 315,000 elected representatives of rural local bodies

2.5 LAKH
Villages drone-surveyed under SVAMITVA scheme for property ownership

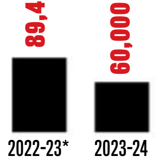
6,861 BLOCKS
in 723 districts benefit from poverty alleviation programme Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (Rural)

BUT...

MNREGA Allocation

↓ 33%

(Figures in Rs crore)



*Revised estimates

Despite the progress, hurdles remain in the way of successful rural development. The biggest being the lack of transparency in the system of administration. Corruption thrives. The accountability mismatch between special purpose vehicles, agencies and panchayats aggravates this. So, to foster efficient rural growth, the ministry is introducing measures to digitise rural space and promote local e-governance. That is vital to make our 650,000 villages and over 800 million citizens self-sufficient. ■

Sarbananda Sonowal
Minister of AYUSH

ANI

Healthy Progress

Ayush remains close to the government's heart as it works towards reform in education and regulation

By Kaushik Deka

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE HAS long been regarded with scepticism than acceptance in India. Changing that dynamic was a Modi government priority from Day 1. A separate ministry for Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy or AYUSH was made in 2014 and attention and funds have flowed freely since for the Sarbananda Sonowal-led ministry. Budgetary allocation has risen fivefold to Rs 3,647 crore this year from Rs 691 crore in 2014. Besides popularising traditional medicine, the ministry is trying to reform the education and regulatory architecture. An independent vertical under the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation with nine regulatory posts has been set up to monitor the quality of Ayush drugs, in line with the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. Collaborations with institutes like CSIR, CIMR and ILBS aim to find an integrative research model to generate scientific evidence for Ayush drugs. An Ayush startup scheme under the Ayush Vikas Yojana is on the anvil. The government's flagship insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat now includes Ayush Health and Wellness Centres (AHWCs) too. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

₹3,648 CRORE

Budget 2023 allocation for Ayush, an 88% jump from 2020

- **National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM) Act, 2020 passed**
- **Ayush products to be checked for quality**

BUT...

2%

Fall in no. of registered Ayush doctors in past five years

INDIA TODAY CONCLAVE 2023 SOUTH

PRESENTED BY

kerala
God's Own Country

INDIA'S BIGGEST

KAMAL HAASAN

RANA DAGGUBATI

SOBHITA DHULIPALA

AISHWARYA LEKSHMI

K.C. VENUGOPAL

ASADUDDIN OWAISI

K.R. SURESH REDDY

JOHN BRITTAS

T. KOSHY

RAJESH JHA

S.N. RAGHUCHANDRAN NAIR

DR. AUSAF SAYEED

KRIS GOPALAKRISHNAN

K.S. SRINIVAS

PADMA BHUSHAN DAAJI KAMLESH D. PATEL

DR. PRIYA ABRAHAM

E.V. RAMAKRISHNAN

T.D. RAMAKRISHNAN

ANITHA THAMPI

DR. METHIL DEVIKA

THURSDAY FRIDAY
01-02
JUNE
KERALA

LOG ON TO:
www.indiatodayconclave.com/south

POWERED BY
KALYAN JEWELLERS

HEALTH PARTNER
25 years of doing the impossible
AMRITA HOSPITAL KOCHI

KNOWLEDGE PARTNER
HINDUSTAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY) CHENNAI

LUXURY DESIGN PARTNER
Fenesta Better by Design
India's No.1 Windows & Doors Brand

STEEL PARTNER
SHYAM STEEL
SHYAM TMT REBAR

IDEAS FEST

PINARAYI VIJAYAN

P. CHIDAMBARAM

AMITABH KANT

S. SOMANATH

VEENA GEORGE

DR. R. BINDU

P. RAJEEV

P.A. MOHAMMED RIYAS

K.N. BALAGOPAL

K. ANNAMALAI

MANICKAM TAGORE

RAHUL EASWAR

FATHIMA THAHILIYA

JUSTICE JASTI CHELAMESWAR

JUSTICE KURIAN JOSEPH

VENU RAJAMONY

RAM MADHAV

B. RAVI PILLAI

PINAKI CHAKRABORTY

K.M. CHANDRASEKHAR

PROF. K.V. THOMAS

RAMAN SUKUMAR

A.J.T. JOHNSINGH

PADMA SHRI PERUVANAM KUTTAN MARAR

VIJAY YESUDAS

MAHESH RAGHVAN

BOSE KRISHNAMACHARI

COMMANDER ABHILASH TOMY (RETD)

MRIDULA RAMESH

MAHESH NARAYANAN

DR. CHINTHA JEROME

EXCLUSIVE BROADCAST ON

INDIA TODAY
TELEVISION

Designed by : CUT Creative Unit Today

CELEBRATION PARTNER
Radico
SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PARTNER
SSVM®
INSTITUTIONS
COIMBATORE

PARTNER
NECC
NATIONAL EGG CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

ASSOCIATE SPONSOR
KERALA INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT FUND BOARD
KIIFB
GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

HOSPITALITY PARTNER
50 Golden Years of Kovalam
The Leela Raviz Kovalam

MEDIA PARTNER
Mathrubhumi
THE NATIONAL DAILY IN MALAYALAM

GETTY IMAGES

ENSURING WELLNESS

Post-Covid, the health ministry has not rested on its laurels but has actively pursued the priorities that were derailed by the pandemic

By Sonali Acharjee

IT'S BY THE WAY A BODY COPES under strain that you judge its robustness. India traced the full Covid journey almost like a patient—sudden capture by a virus, moments of hypoxia and panic, despair and debility, pain, convalescence and then recovery. Judge by the fact that, in the end, it had rolled out the most extensive vaccination programme in the world. All of 2.2 billion vaccine doses till now. But it isn't just vaccines that the ministry of health and family welfare (MoHFW) excelled in during the pandemic. Many forget that when Covid struck, we had only 14 labs to test samples. By the end of 2022, this figure stood at 1,453 government labs and 1,935 private ones, which together have a capacity to test 250,000 samples a day. The ministry also set up INSACOG, a national-level disease surveillance network of 10 genomic sampling labs. These two improvements should help significantly in the handling of any future pandemics.

Despite the pandemic having taken up a fair share of resources, the ministry has made up for lost time after 2021. Besides the increased budgeted expenditure on healthcare (2.1 per cent of GDP in FY23), there has been significant progress in expanding the coverage of Ayushman Bharat that entitles around 120 million poor families to receive a health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. As of May 2023, 51.2 million hospital admissions worth over Rs 61,501 crore had been authorised, over 28,405 hospitals empanelled and 234.2 million Ayushman cards issued.

At the start of the Modi government's second term, heavy emphasis was laid by the ministry on disease prevention. Plans were made to create 150,000 health and wellness centres by upgrading existing PHCs in urban and rural areas. The target was achieved by December 2022. By April-end, 159,585 health and wellness centres were operational. Together, the centres have done 324 million screenings for diabetes, 222 million screenings for oral cancer, 71 million for cervical cancer and 10 million for breast cancer.

ASHA workers have also been a vital cog in this. The work done by the 1.05 million such workers in the country has already shown results, with the NFHS-5 survey showing a 14.4 per cent increase in full immunisation coverage as compared to NFHS-4. Indeed, to

BOLD & BRAVE

2.2 BILLION

Covid vaccine doses administered in biggest vaccination campaign ever

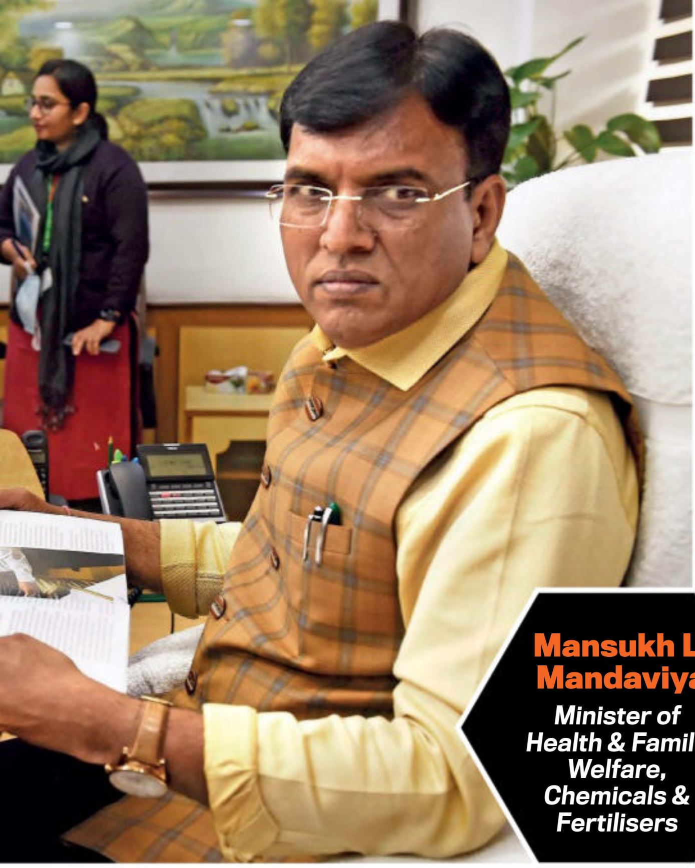
120 MILLION

poor families now get Rs 5 lakh health cover under Ayushman Bharat

BUT...

Out-of-pocket health expenses still affect 55 mn Indian families annually; 17% pushed into penury*

*Source: WHO report 2022



Mansukh L. Mandaviya

Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Chemicals & Fertilisers

make up for the time lost to Covid, an intensive immunisation programme was held from February to May 2022, which saw the vaccination of nearly 6 million children and 1.5 million pregnant women.

Other health indexes have also improved. India has already achieved the MMR (maternal mortality ratio) of less than 100/lakh live births. Institutional deliveries and skilled birth attendant deliveries are nearly 90 per cent at the moment. Infant mortality has also declined. According to SRS (Sample Registration System) 2021, the IMR in 2019 was at 30 per lakh live births, down from 32 in 2018. As a result of improved awareness and accessibility to family planning methods, India has also achieved a replacement rate of 2 for its population.

When it comes to diseases, MoHFW's biggest achievement of the past four years has been in tuberculosis detection and treatment. Designated microscopy centres (DMCs) have increased by 61 per cent (23,028 in 2022) over the past nine years while 4,700-plus new molecular diagnostic laboratories have also come up. To further improve detection, door-to-door campaigns and mobile TB detection units were active in remote areas. As a result, in 2021, India was able to notify 18 per cent more TB cases as compared to 2020. That same year also saw nearly 700,000 notifications from the private sector, the highest ever. The government has also made available two critical drugs—bedaquiline and delamanid—for the treatment of multi-drug resistant TB. To further improve treatment outcomes, a nutrition scheme has been introduced, which supports patients with Rs 500 per month for the entire duration of their treatment. As a result, in 2021, the treatment success rate went up to 84 per cent. ■

CHEMICALS & FERTILISERS

Aatmanirbhar Pharma

Reducing India's import dependency in pharma and handling the fertiliser crisis have been the ministry's chief preoccupations this term

By Himanshu Shekhar

FOR LONG DEPENDENT ON IMPORTS of key starting materials (KSM), active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) and medical devices, the Rs 25,000 crore PLI scheme for pharma, bulk drugs and medical devices could well be turning the tide. Fifty-one projects for APIs, 26 for medical devices and another 55 for pharma have got approval so far with investments of Rs 22,000 crore. A National Medical Device Policy, 2023, was also approved in April.

The battle has been different on the fertilisers front, courtesy Russian aggression in Ukraine. India began to feel the pinch as the West imposed sanctions on Russia, one of our top suppliers of fertiliser components urea and potash. Deals with supplier countries like Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Jordan helped avert the crisis and ensure record harvests in FY23. Looking back at the crisis, minister Mansukh Mandaviya says, "It was clear from day one that we had to protect our farmers and the agri sector from global market uncertainties. We could not afford any disruption in food production. We ensured uninterrupted supply of fertilisers at the best possible price through long-term agreements. At home, we increased subsidy." ■

BOLD & BRAVE

₹25,000 CRORE

worth PLI schemes for pharma eased import dependency

Navigated fertiliser crisis fallout of Russia-Ukraine war

> **"IT WAS CLEAR FROM DAY ONE THAT WE HAD TO PROTECT OUR FARMERS.... WE ENSURED UNINTERRUPTED SUPPLY OF FERTILISERS AT THE BEST POSSIBLE PRICE"**
>
> **–MANSUKH MANDAVIYA**

CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

Jitendra Singh
Minister for Science & Tech, DAE, Dept of Space

BOLD & BRAVE

▸2023 space policy opens doors for private players

▸Lithium reserves in J&K, Rajasthan to boost EV push

ISRO's moon mission, Chandrayaan-3, to launch in July

BUT...

<2% India's share in the space economy. Why? 75% of private firms make low-value products

Reaching for the Stars

The ministry has pushed collaborations, be it private sector in space, PSUs for N-power stations or scientific research

By Amarnath K. Menon

WITH THE 2023 SPACE POLICY, the government cleared the decks for India to take a quantum jump into the Second Space Age. For one, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will transition out of manufacturing of operational space systems and lean more on non-government entities (NGEs). The private sector thus becomes a critical stakeholder in the space economy.

ISRO is the sixth largest space agency in the world and also ranks fifth globally in the private space tech sector, with over 400 companies operating. But around 75 per cent are involved in manufacturing products in the low-to-medium value add category, one reason why India's share in the global space economy is less than two per cent. ISRO is now focusing on Chandrayaan (moon mission) and Gaganyaan (human spaceflight mission). The first human spaceflight is scheduled for the last quarter of 2024.

The ministry's investment in the science and technology (S&T) system more than doubled in the past nine years to Rs 6,002 crore in 2022-23. Now India ranks third, after the US and China, in the number of PhDs awarded in science and engineering (nearly 25,000). It is also the third most attractive investment destination for technology transactions. The National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI), launched in 2019, has led to India leapfrogging to No. 40 in the Global Innovation Index (GII).

The ministry is also excited at the discovery of lithium reserves—a key component for batteries of electric vehicles (EVs)—in J&K and Rajasthan. Officials claim the finds could service up to 80 per cent of the country's lithium requirements, which is good news for the government's plan to increase EV penetration to 30 per cent by 2030.

Meanwhile, the department of atomic energy (DAE) has got the go-ahead on joint ventures with PSUs for resources to set up N-power stations. It has already given bulk approval for installing of 10 nuclear reactors. And the DAE's PPP-based research reactor project, envisaged in 2021 for the production of a range of nuclear medicines, could transform India's stature in the healthcare industry. It should be online in five years. ■

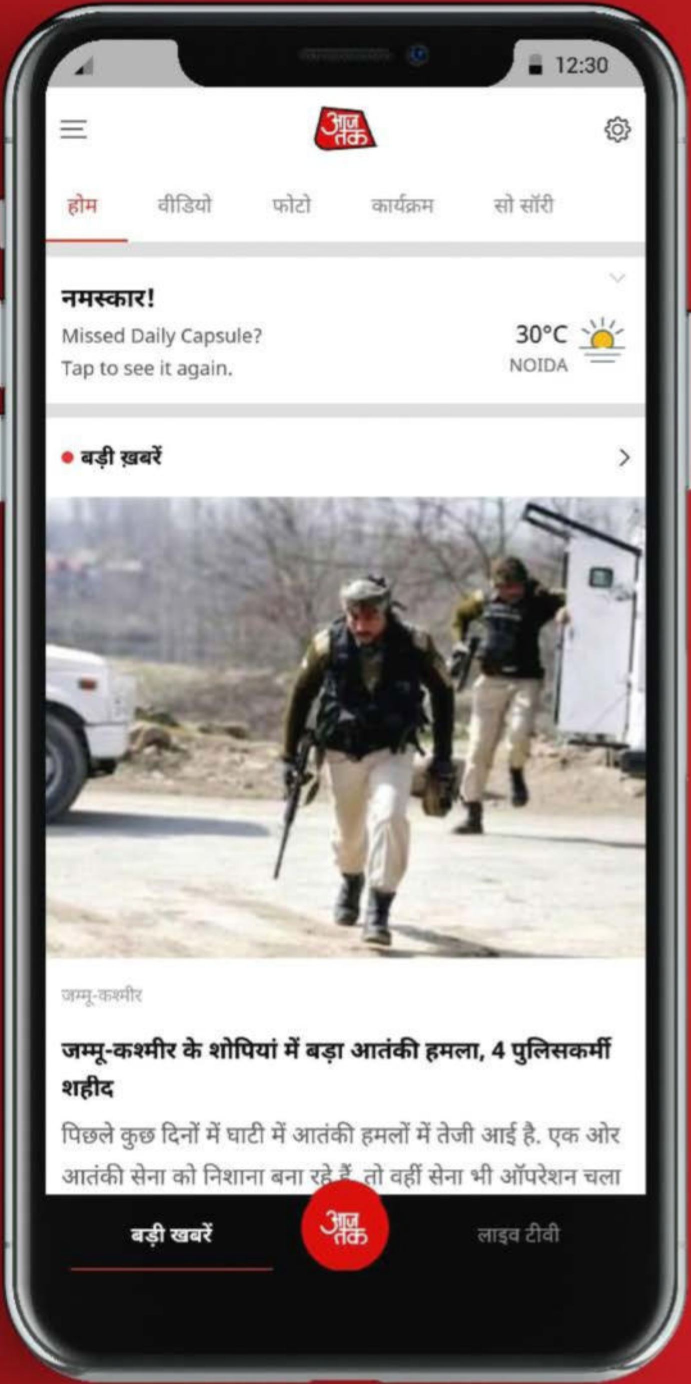
देश का नं. 1
हिंदी न्यूज़ ऐप

जुड़े रहिए हर खबर से,
कहीं भी, कभी भी

अभी डाउनलोड करें

aajtak.in/app

उपलब्ध है



12:30

होम वीडियो फोटो कार्यक्रम सो सॉरी

नमस्कार!
Missed Daily Capsule?
Tap to see it again.

30°C
NOIDA

● बड़ी ख़बरें

जम्मू-कश्मीर

जम्मू-कश्मीर के शोपियां में बड़ा आतंकी हमला, 4 पुलिसकर्मी शहीद

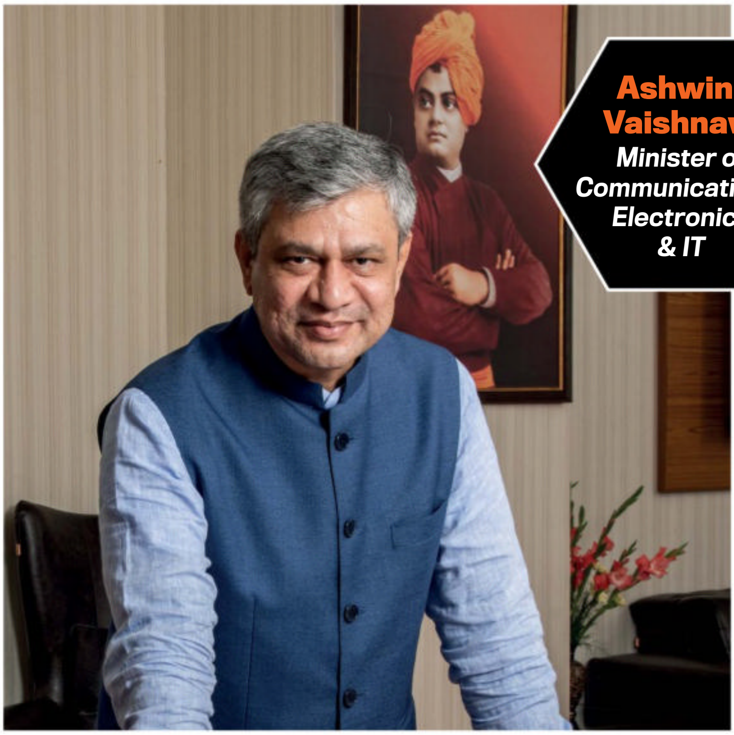
पिछले कुछ दिनों में घाटी में आतंकी हमलों में तेजी आई है. एक ओर आतंकी सेना को निशाना बना रहे हैं, तो वहीं सेना भी ऑपरेशन चला

बड़ी खबरें लाइव टीवी

Wiring Up the Nation

Speedy building of infrastructure and a push for indigenous production of telecom equipment have remained a key thrust

By Anilesh S. Mahajan



Ashwini Vaishnaw
Minister of Communications; Electronics & IT

BANDEEP SINGH

ON MAY 24, UNION minister of electronics and information technology (MeitY) and communications Ashwini Vaishnaw inaugurated India's 200,000th 5G site in Dehradun and predicted that by the end of 2023, 100,000 more sites would be added.

When he took over as the communications and MeitY minister in July 2021, Vaishnaw faced policy bottlenecks. PM Modi had tasked him to build infrastructure, while keeping self-reliance in focus. Vaishnaw faced opposition from the RSS-affiliated Swadeshi Jagran Manch and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh for pushing for the disinvestment of BSNL. He has abandoned the plan, and is instead using the PSU to push for domestic manufacturing. State-owned telecom R&D firm C-DoT has partnered with a TCS-led consortium for a deal with BSNL to deploy a 4G network across India. BSNL will use a 4G Core developed by C-DoT. Not just this, C-DoT has developed a 5G Non-Standalone (NSA) Core, which establishes reliable, secure connectivity. India has over 759 million active internet users, and it is estimated that 56 per cent of all new users in India by 2025 will be from rural areas. This justifies the MeitY's focus on indigenous production of telecom equipment. Vaishnaw—himself a communications and electronics engineer—has actively led this push. In March 2023, he came out with India's 6G roadmap, the vision document Bharat 6G and opened the 6G R&D test bed. The minister has anchored two of the biggest PLI (production-linked incentive) schemes to support telecom and IT development. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

50
No. of Indian cities with 5G

56%
Estimated share of rural users among new internet users by 2025

200,000
No. of 5G sites in India

BUT...
Data Privacy Bill has yet to be passed

VIKRAM SHARMA

Arjun Ram Meghwal

Minister of State for Law and Justice

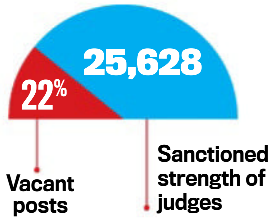
BOLD & BRAVE

TRIPLE TALAQ

BUT...

50 MILLION

Pendency of cases across Indian courts



LAW & JUSTICE

Restoring Balance

The new minister has his work cut out–iron out differences with the judiciary, strengthen judicial infrastructure and help reduce case pendency

By Kaushik Deka

IN THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS, under cabinet minister Kiren Rijiju, the Union ministry of law and justice remained in the news mostly because of the increasing friction between the judiciary and the executive over a host of issues—from the row over the appointment of judges to the government's charge of judicial activism and overreach. Now, a change of minister—Arjun Ram Meghwal assumed office in the middle of May—such contentious issues are expected to be resolved amiably and in accordance with the country's Constitution.

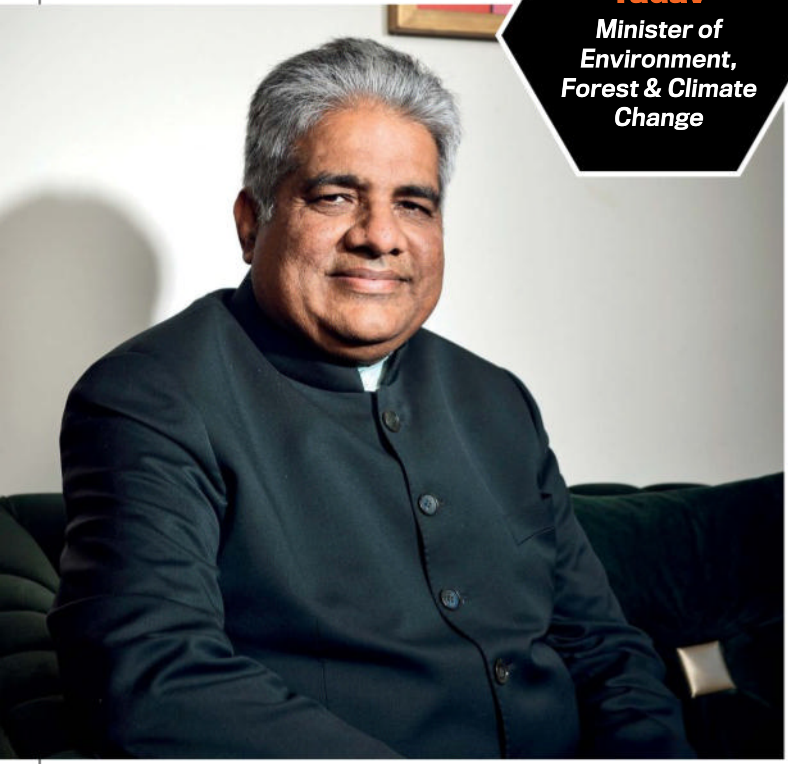
Before that, however, the Indian judiciary needs to be strengthened in terms of both manpower and infrastructure. The recently released *India Justice Report* by Tata Trusts says that the country has 19 judges per million people (when calculated against the sanctioned strength), still lagging behind the Law Commission's 1987 target of reaching 50 judges per million population in a decade. The ground reality? India has only just over 20,000 judges against a sanctioned strength of 25,628 (as of last year). In high courts, 320 of the 1,114 sanctioned posts of judges are vacant. And, consequently, the pendency of cases currently stands at 50 million.

A 2016 study by Daksh India found that delay in disposal of cases impacts 0.5 per cent of India's GDP annually. Adequate judicial infrastructure is a prerequisite for reducing such delays, according to the National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms. But the infrastructure, particularly in lower courts, is still in an abysmal state. This, despite a three-decade-old centrally sponsored scheme, under which Rs 9,815 crore have been spent on the development of judicial infrastructure to date, of which Rs 6,371 crore (65 per cent) were pumped in since 2014. ■

A Thinner Canopy

India has set ambitious environmental goals for itself. But achieving them will require more than just conviction

By Rahul Noronha



Bhupender Yadav

Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change

RAJWANT RAWAT

BOLD & BRAVE

50 PER CENT Share of electricity India aims to produce from clean fuels by 2030

20 cheetahs were brought to India from Africa—eight in September 2022 and 12 this February

BUT...

‘Moderately dense forests’ area dropped by **1,582** sq. km

(2019) **308,472** sq. km

(2021) **306,890** sq. km

CLIMATE CHANGE has a mental component: what people think of it can be as fickle as the weather, and as determinative. In contemporary India, the environment presents a paradox: acknowledged as vital in theory, often seen as an irritant on the path to growth in practice. The environment, forests and climate change ministry, invested with more and more significance these days, finds itself navigating that dichotomy. What the world’s most populous country does to fight climate change is of interest not just nationally but internationally too. Many of its self-given goals are more than kosher, in sync with global (and Indian) needs, and the mantelpiece boasts of some showpiece trophies. There are, however, areas where it’s prone to scoring self-goals.

The good news first: the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC), set up in 2015 to support adaptation activities in states/UTs vulnerable to climate change, has sanctioned 39 projects so far. India has also launched valuable initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance, which has 93 member countries, and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. In 2022, India, under its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), resolved to bring down the emission intensity of its GDP by 45 per cent by 2030 from 2005 levels. It also aims to meet 50 per cent of its electricity requirements from cleaner fuels by 2030, while keeping its eyes set on net-zero emissions by 2070.

India earned global attention last year for its cheetah translocation project, but the recent deaths of three adult cheetahs in captivity, brought from Africa, and three cubs born in India have cast doubts on the project’s future. As for that other prized big cat, Project Tiger is one of the world’s success stories—the quadrennial census reported an increase of 200 specimens (with 3,167 tigers recorded in 2022) over 2018.

But tigers are also symbolic of a much larger whole. The very sanctity of forest zones is at stake, and protecting it is a challenge for environment minister Bhupender Yadav. The State of the Forest Reports tell of a marginal rise in forest cover over 2019-21—from 21.67 per cent of the total area to 21.71 per cent—with 1,582 sq. km of ‘moderately dense forests’ vanishing. And changes to the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, the Indian Forest Act, 1927, and the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972—proposed so as to ease sanctions for strategically key projects—have earned widespread criticism. With rising human-animal conflict at one end and urban pollution at the other—a few Indian cities are among the world’s worst-hit—it’s an area in need of serious attention. ■

IndiaContent

SEARCH FOR
EDITORIAL IMAGES
ENDS HERE

Mixed Signals

The aim to widen the broadcast coverage is commendable, but the ministry has to shed its 'controller' image

By Kaushik Deka

IN ITS OWN WORDS, THE MINISTRY of Information and Broadcasting, now headed by Anurag Thakur, is entrusted with the task of disseminating information about government policies, schemes and programmes through the different mediums of mass communication. However, in the last few years, it has been embroiled in several controversies over 'control' of information—from showdowns with big tech companies to new laws reportedly aimed at censoring content on TV, digital and OTT platforms. Critics cried foul when the ministry formed a fact check unit, a TV channel was banned for allegedly hurting national security, and several YouTube channels got blocked intermittently. The truth, though, has other shades too. Watchdogs do raise valid concerns, but the government has its own reasons for keeping a hawk-eye on the ceaseless flow of information in this digital age.

Beyond these debates, the ministry took several positive steps: streamlining Prasar Bharti norms to make its functioning transparent; amending policy guidelines on the expansion of FM radio to generate employment opportunities and ensure its spread to remote areas; adding three laws of the ministry under the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2022, for decriminalisation; launching the Broadcast Seva Portal for speedy processing of broadcasters' applications; and preserving and digitising regional films. Recently, Amazon India signed a Letter of Engagement with the ministry for a multi-layered collaboration to promote creative talent, build capacity at existing institutes and platforms and construct a route to globally showcase 'Made in India' creative content. ■

Anurag Thakur
Minister of Information & Broadcasting; Youth Affairs & Sports

BOLD & BRAVE

(((FM)))

▸ Three amendments to the FM radio policy guidelines

20 MILLION

Listeners to be added to All India Radio network

1,50,000

DD FreeDish Set Top Boxes distributed in remote areas

BUT...

▸ IT Rules 2021 from becoming a tool for censoring digital media

▸ Amend the Cinematograph Act of 1952 to allow filmmakers to appeal against censorship

Photograph by **BANDEEP SINGH**

BOLD & BRAVE

2,700
ATHLETES

Given training and financial support under Khelo India since its launch in 2017

- **National Anti-Doping Bill, 2021, passed**

BUT...

- **The National Youth Policy, 2021, is yet to be passed**
- **The wrestlers' as-yet futile protest and charges against WFI chief dent India's image**

YOUTH AFFAIRS & SPORTS

Upping the Game

Several government schemes seek to harness the potential of the youth but sports bodies need to be run professionally

By Kaushik Deka

INDIA'S POTENTIAL in sports is perhaps best measured in kilotonnes, given that it has the world's largest population in the 15-24 age bracket—around 254 million, as presently estimated by the United Nations Population Fund. But it still lies largely buried, like an untapped goldmine. That analogy applies equally well to everything else the young can get up to, as India struggles to cash in on this golden period. The objective of the Department of Youth Affairs (DoYA), led by Anurag Thakur, is to act as a facilitator to harness the power of this young demographic in fruitful ways. Its flagship schemes, training institutes and events are oriented to this end. In the last three years, the DoYA has also mobilised young men and women to be Covid warriors and take part in the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Clean India (Elimination of Single-use Plastic) campaigns.

Now, India's G20 presidency gives the DoYA a platform to amplify its efforts with the Youth20 engagement group. In the run-up to the main Y20 summit, it has been holding Y20 consultations at various universities—offering a chance to India's youth to link up with global causes and debates.

Sports has already started registering such an arc. In recent years, Indian sportspersons have been earning some hard-won global esteem—and medals—at the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, Olympics and other big sports events. The Department of Sports has played an enabling role here, with schemes such as TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme), Khelo India, training centres under the Sports Authority of India, awards and forms of assistance.

At the same time, the state of sports administration in India isn't exactly pretty. Across disciplines, federations have been mired in controversies over malpractices and political capture. The coup de grace, of course, is what dominates headlines these days: India's top wrestlers having to take to the streets to demand action against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, ruling party MP and wrestling federation chief, for alleged sexual harassment. No Y20 will cover up for the dent it causes to India's image. ■

SHOWING OFF INDIA

The ministry is striving to showcase India's rich culture and tourism to its own people and the world, while trying to bring the Northeast closer to the Centre

By Kaushik Deka

DoNER

EVER SINCE NARENDRA MODI took charge as prime minister, the eight Northeastern states have emerged as the new growth engine of India and the ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) has played a pivotal role in this. In the last eight years, the gross budgetary support through 55 ministries and departments for the development of the region has seen an increase of 185 per cent. Thanks to meticulous tracking of expenditure by the DoNER ministry under G. Kishan Reddy, the actual expenditure not only increased in the financial year gone by but also exceeded the target for the first time ever.

The launch of the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for Northeast Region (PM-DevINE) scheme in 2022 to build infrastructure projects with an outlay of Rs 6,600 crore has only speeded up the development of the region. Earlier tagged as 'remote', connectivity in the region has accelerated—over 4,000 km of road projects are being implemented, eight new airports operationalised, 19 new waterways identified and all broad-gauge lines have been electrified. From India's first sports university in Manipur to the Northeast's first AIIMS in Guwahati, the region has showcased inclusive development. The microfinance offered by North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFi) has helped more than 1.6 million persons get skilled and some 900,000 to access MSMEs benefits. A regional action plan is being drawn up for the development of tourism in consultation with the northeastern states and other stakeholders. A task force has been constituted to steer the growth of agriculture too. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

110% INCREASE

₹5,892 CRORE

Allocation to the ministry in Budget 2023, up from ₹2,800 crore last time

PM-DevINE scheme

- Launched in 2022
- 4000+ km road projects implemented
- 8 new airports operationalised

BUT...

<₹21,000 CRORE

Amount central ministries left unspent on the Northeast since 2018-19

G. Kishan Reddy

Minister of Development of N-E Region, Culture & Tourism

ANI

CULTURE

THE NODAL MINISTRY FOR CURATING the various campaigns under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) programme, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated in March 2021 as a countdown to the 75th anniversary of Indian Independence, more than 136,000 events have been organised. These include mega events such as Har Ghar Tiranga, Vande Bharatam and Kalanjali. Apart from the Prime Ministers' Museum, inaugurated last year, eight new museums have been setup with financial assistance under the Museum Grant Scheme. The ministry has also taken steps to promote Buddhist culture in other countries, such as funding the construction of the India International Centre for Buddhist Culture and Heritage at Lumbini, Nepal, and organising an exposition of sacred Kapilavastu relics of the Buddha in Mongolia. One of the ministry's achievements has been recovery of artefacts stolen from India—between 1947 and 2014, only 13 stolen artefacts were recovered while 228 such artefacts have been recovered since 2014. Apart from identifying 100 centrally protected monuments and sites as Adarsh Smaraks for providing tourist amenities, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has traced 68 monuments out of the 92 that were reported missing in the performance audit report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India in 2013. However, budgetary allocation for Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana, a scheme for promoting art and culture, went down to Rs 21 crore in 2023, from Rs 214 crore in last year's revised estimate. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

₹3,399 CRORE

Outlay for ministry of culture in Union budget

BUT...

- **Budgetary allocation for Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana, an umbrella scheme for the promotion of art and culture, goes down from last year's revised estimate**

₹214 CRORE 2022-23

₹210 CRORE 2023-24

TOURISM

TOURISM BEING A STATE SUBJECT, the Union tourism ministry's role is mostly limited to guiding and supporting the industry. The ministry under Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD schemes provides financial assistance to states for developing tourism-related infrastructure. The high-profile Kashi Vishwanath temple corridor project, which connects the temple with the ghats in Varanasi, ensuring easy movement of pilgrims, was inaugurated in December 2021. To boost tourism as the world recovered from Covid-19, 127,999 free tourist visas were issued between October 6, 2021 and March 31, 2022. The ministry also launched the Dekho Apna Desh initiative to boost domestic tourism. The ministry's digital 'Utsav Portal' aims to showcase all festivals and live *darshans*. Apart from hosting four G20 meetings, the tourism ministry under G. Kishan Reddy is providing support to all G20 events by conducting sensitisation programmes for stakeholders like taxi drivers, hotel staff and guides. Along with the National Digital Tourism Mission to connect the entire sector digitally, the ministry is working on the implementation of the Uniform Tourist Police Scheme to get stakeholders like the Union home ministry, Bureau of Police Research & Development and state governments on the same platform, so that they work in sync to respond to tourism requirements. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

- **Kashi Vishwanath temple corridor project inaugurated in 2021**

- **Digital 'Utsav Portal' to showcase events, fests, live darshans**

BUT...

- **No sign of new tourism policy**

Smriti Irani
Minister of Women & Child Development, Minority Affairs

WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

No Child’s Play

The government has taken several steps for the welfare of women and children, but the real challenges run deeper

By Sonali Acharjee

IT’S COMMON WISDOM THAT no society can advance until its women are empowered and contribute as equal partners in development—and India, to put it mildly, has plenty of room for improvement on that front. The work of the Women & Child Development (WCD) Ministry, thus, assumes deep significance in our national project. Last year, the ministry divided its major schemes into three categories: the Saksham Anganwadi & Poshan 2.0 for nutrition and education, Mission Shakti for the safety and empowerment of women, and Mission Vatsalya for child welfare. All three have notched up some valuable hash marks on a sheet still largely blank.

Under Saksham Anganwadi, the WCD ministry—led by Smriti Irani since last year—plans to upgrade the infrastructure at some 200,000 centres with smart learning facilities. As of December 2022, the government had distributed 1.1 million-odd smartphones and 1.2 million health monitoring devices among anganwadi workers. The Poshan Tracker app, launched in 2021, had onboarded over 98 million beneficiaries until last September. As of 2022, some 27.9 million pregnant and lactating mothers had received financial aid under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana. Over 730 one-stop centres have also been set up across India to provide aid to women facing violence.

But these steps seem modest when set against the journey left to be made. UNICEF data suggests that every year, nearly 1.5 million Indian girls get married before the legal age of 18. From 2017 to 2021, India counted a total of 35,493 dowry deaths. The latest NCRB report (2021) shows an alarming rise in the rate of crime against women (incidents per 1 lakh population): from 56.5 per cent in 2020 to 64.5 per cent. Crimes against children also spiked—2020 saw 128,000 cases, that rose 16 per cent to 149,000 in 2021. Not to speak of child and maternal nutrition markers that remain grim. That WCD got only a Rs 25,449 crore outlay in 2023—a tenth of what roads got—and that India’s gender budget has dipped to 0.74 per cent of its GDP speaks of a need to reset priorities. ■

Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH

BOLD & BRAVE

98 MILLION
No. of beneficiaries onboarded on Poshan (nutrition) Tracker since 2021

1 MILLION
Health monitoring devices, smartphones distributed among anganwadi workers

BUT...

3.3 MILLION
Number of malnourished children in India: over half of them fall in the severely malnourished category

MINORITY AFFAIRS

A MAJOR GAP

Existing schemes aside, the Centre must take an earnest look at minority welfare

By Kaushik Deka

THE MINISTRY of Minority Affairs under the PM Modi-led government has received mixed opinions over the last few years, with fund allocation being a key area of criticism. In the last financial year, the budget estimate for the ministry was Rs 5,020.5 crore, which was later revised to Rs 2,612.66 crore. Until March this year, only Rs 712.5 crore was utilised. This year's budget at Rs 3,097 crore is 38 per cent lower than last year's initial allocation. Many have also condemned the discontinuation of schemes such as Padho Pardesh, Naya Savera, the Maulana Azad National Fellowship and a sizable component of the Pre-Matric Scholarship.

However, several steps have also been taken for minorities, particularly on the gender front. In education, as many as 30 per cent reserved seats for minorities are now earmarked for girls. Some 40,000 women have been trained under Nai Roshni, a leadership development scheme, since 2019. Also, as many as 4,314 women will perform Hajj without male companions this year, the largest since the 2018 reform did away with the rule. ■

BOLD & BRAVE

4,314

No. of women to go on Hajj without male companions this year, the largest since the rule was struck down in 2018

BUT...

The ministry's budget has been slashed by 38 per cent this year over last year's initial allocation

FY24	₹3,097 crore
FY23	₹5,020 crore

TRIBAL AFFAIRS

BOLD & BRAVE

1 MILLION

No. of tribal youth who will be digitally upskilled under the Going Online as Leaders 2.0 initiative

BUT...

- **Clash between Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022 and Forest Rights Act, 2006 pose land use challenges to tribals**

Overlooked No More

The year 2022 marked many firsts for tribals

By Sonali Acharjee

GETTY IMAGES

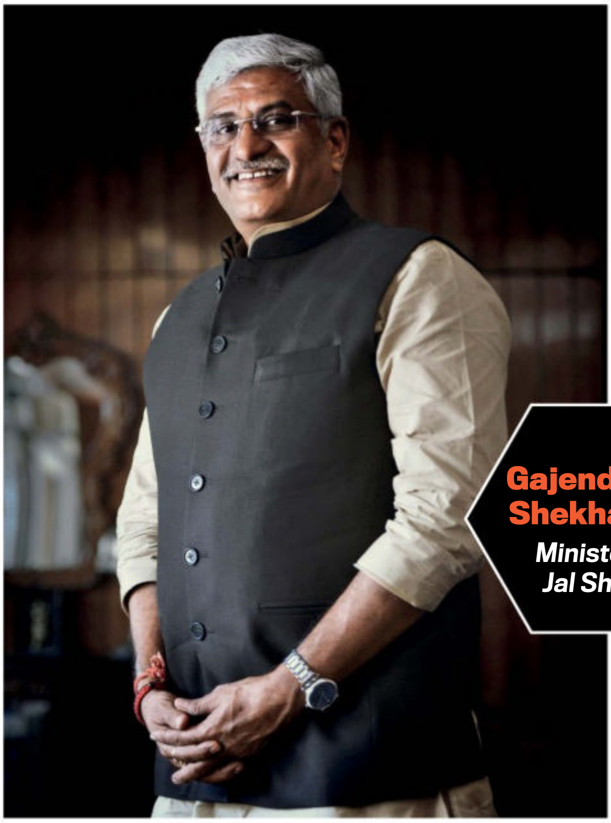
Arjun Munda

Minister of Tribal Affairs

THE YEAR 2022 saw several key milestones for India's tribals. The country elected its first Adivasi president, set up the first research institute for tribal issues and put renewed focus on their welfare. The budget outlay for the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, led by Arjun Munda, increased from Rs 4,296 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 6,815 crore in 2019-20 and Rs 12,462 crore in 2023-24.

Education and livelihood are key focus areas. Launched in 2020, Going Online as Leaders, a joint effort by the Centre and Meta, aims to digitally upskill 1 million tribal youth in its second leg that started last year. The ministry is also helping tribals from the Northeast market their products.

On the health front, there are now 15,041 Ayushman Bharat centres in 177 tribal districts. In addition to the Tribal TB drive last year, under which 10 million people were screened for TB, regular health camps are also being held in tribal areas. ■



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

Gajendra S. Shekhawat
Minister of Jal Shakti

Water Vows

The Jal Jeevan Mission has made a commendable effort in trying to ease India's water woes and get functional tap connections to rural households. Much work remains in other projects

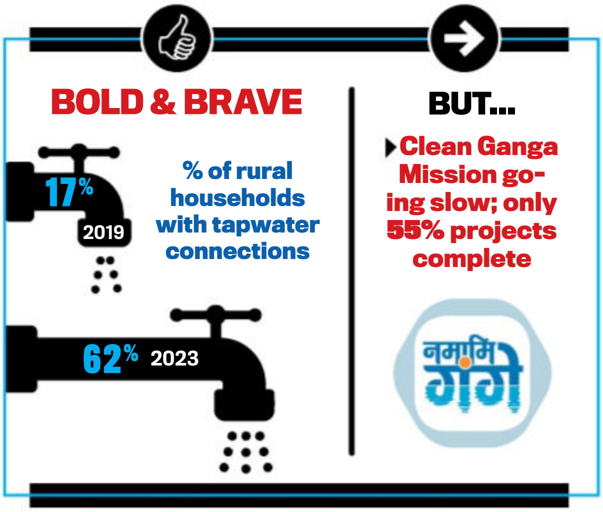
By Amarnath K. Menon

THE JAL JEEVAN MISSION (JJM), the central government's flagship programme launched in 2019 to provide piped water to all homes, is on track. In the past year, as many as 21.2 million new rural households got water connections, bringing the total number to 121.5 million (as of May 31), says ministry data. JJM connections are called functional household tap connection (FHTC), qualified as at least 55 litres of water per day per person on a regular basis. This covers about 62 per cent of all rural households, up from 17 per cent when the mission was launched. While rural households in seven states and UTs had 100 per cent tap water coverage, as many as 10 states had less than 50 per cent coverage. Jharkhand (24 per cent) and Lakshadweep (0 per cent) had least coverage in the country.

With a focus on the wellbeing of children, the Jal Shakti ministry led by Gajendra Shekhawat launched a campaign in 2020 to provide tap water connections to all schools, anganwadi centres and *ashramshalas* (tribal residential schools). Tap water supply is available now in 884,000 (85.8 per cent) schools and 914,000 anganwadi centres. Five states—Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Kerala and Telangana—and three UTs—Andaman and Nicobar islands, Puducherry and Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu—now provide 100 per cent tap water connectivity in schools and anganwadi centres. Another 16 states are in the range of 90 per cent or more.

So far, over 520,000 *pani samitis* (village water and sanitation committees) have been formed under JJM to manage water supply infrastructure. More than 1.7 million women have also been trained to test water samples using field test kits, leading to their empowerment in rural areas. Meanwhile, Mission Amrit Sarovar (MAS), to rejuvenate 75 water bodies in every district and create 50,000 water bodies of an acre or more each by August 2023, remains a work in progress.

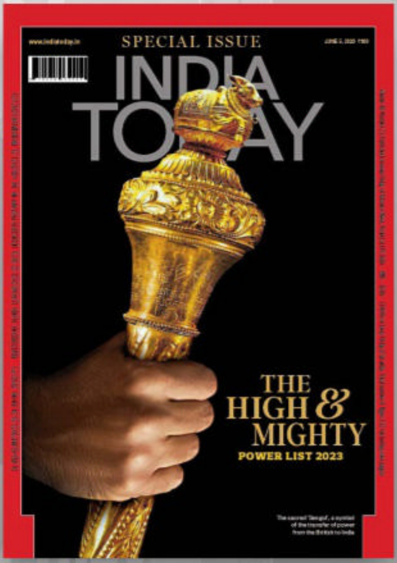
The National Mission for Clean Ganga has entered the Arth Ganga phase where a sustainable development model has been formulated with a focus on economic activities related to the river (such as monetising treated sewage). Under the Namami Gange Programme, 224 of the 406 projects have been completed, accounting for 55 per cent of the sanctioned projects. ■



INDIA TODAY

INDIA TODAY GROUP

MAHARASHTRA SHINDE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS
INDIAN NAVY THE LETHAL NEW MARINE DRONES
IIT SUICIDES AN ALARMING RISE
INDIA TODAY
KARNATAKA
THE BURDEN OF VICTORY



SPECIAL ISSUE
INDIA TODAY
THE HIGH & MIGHTY
POWER LIST 2023

IN DEPTH KNOWLEDGE FROM THE MOST CREDIBLE SOURCE

Subscribe and get upto 67% discount

YES! I WISH TO SUBSCRIBE TO INDIA TODAY

Please tick your subscription choice and send the form to: We Care, Living Media India Limited, C-9, Sector 10, Noida-201301 (India)

TERM-1 YEAR | NO. OF ISSUES-52

PLAN	COVER PRICE	OFFER PRICE	SAVINGS	SELECT
PRINT ONLY	₹5200	₹3099	41%	☐
PRINT + DIGITAL	₹10,400	₹3499	67%	☐

Please fill the form in CAPITAL LETTERS

I am enclosing Cheque/DD No.:______________________dated:____________________

drawn on (specify bank):____________________ favouring Living Media India Limited for

₹ ____________(Add ₹50/- for non Delhi cheques, not valid in case of at par cheques)

Name:____________________________ Address: ______________________________

__________________ City:______________ State:______________ Pin:______________

Mobile:__________________________ Email:__________________________________

SCAN HERE TO SUBSCRIBE

FOR MORE DETAILS ON THE OFFER, YOU MAY CONTACT THROUGH BELOW OPTIONS

PHONE AND WHATSAPP
+91 8597778778

E-MAIL
wecare@intoday.com

LOG ON TO
www.indiatoday.in/subscribe

Living Media India Ltd. reserves the right to terminate or extend this offer or any part thereof at any time. For other terms and conditions, please visit www.indiatoday.in

IRS 2019 Q4 (TR)

INDIA TODAY

BREAKING NEWS

JUST A TAP AWAY

9:41
INDIA TODAY
LIVE
TOP NEWS
VIDEOS
PROGRAMMES
TOP STORIES
LOK SABHA 2019

Narendra Modi Live: By Congress-mukt India we will fulfil Gandhi's dream

PM Narendra Modi was speaking in Lok Sabha

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

AVAILABLE ON

LEISURE

WILLIAM DALRYMPLE: IN A HAPPY SPACE
PG 70

CLIFFORD MIRANDA: A BEAUTIFUL GAME
PG 74

RUSKIN BOND: ONE DAY AT A TIME
PG 72

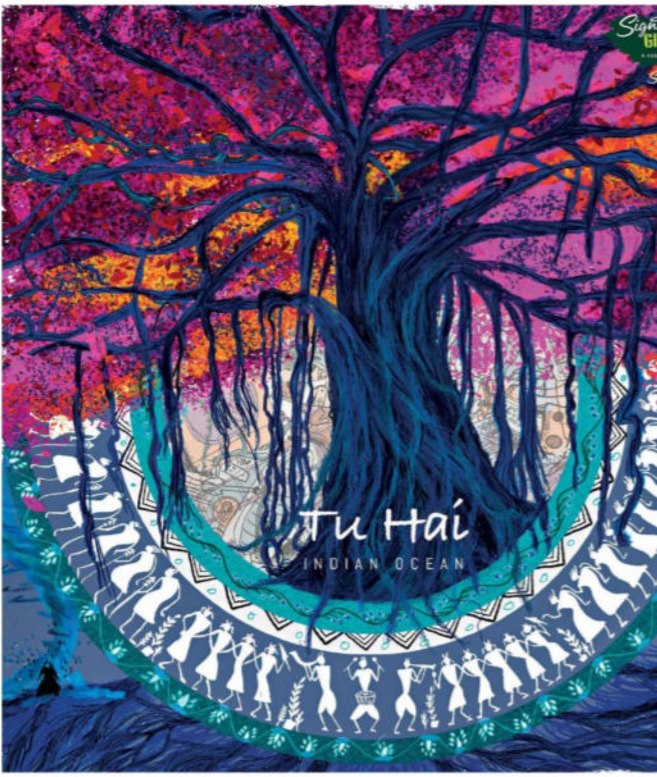
Q&A WITH SANYA MALHOTRA
PG 76

MUSIC

BACK WITH A BANG

IT'S BEEN A LONG WAIT, BUT ONE OF INDIA'S MOST-LOVED ROCK BANDS, **INDIAN OCEAN**, IS BACK WITH A NEW ALBUM, *TU HAI*

T



The world was quite a different place when folk-fusion act Indian Ocean last released an album, 2014's star-studded collaborative experiment *Tandanu*. Narendra Modi had swept to power. Vladimir Putin had annexed Crimea in Russia's smaller first invasion of Ukraine. Barack Obama was still in the White House. The climate crisis still seemed solvable, rather than inevitable. We live in darker, more dangerous times now.

But this is still a world in which Indian Ocean's central thesis—love for the environment, syncretic philosophy, and for each other—is relevant, and the band stays on-message for their eighth album *Tu Hai*, released on May 5. The six tracks on the album all deal with themes of sustainable living and spiritual renewal, set to music that blends Indian classical and folk traditions with elements of progressive rock, spiritual jazz and agit-pop.

"We'd accumulated these songs and were finally ready to present them to the world when Covid hit," says the band's guitarist Nikhil Rao, speaking over Zoom, along with vocalist Himanshu Joshi. "Once we put them together, we realised that they all dealt with concerns that are all around us and that we ourselves struggle with. Like environmental stuff, rampant materialism, or debates about God. Questions that everyone has struggled with at some point in their lives," says Rao.

The lead single 'Jaadu Maya'—a collaboration with writer-comedian-film-maker Varun Grover originally written for the *Masaan* (2015) soundtrack—is a haunting dirge for a world at war with itself, and a call to arms to save it despite its imperfections. Joshi credits Grover for the song's compelling visual imagery. "For me, Varun is on the same pedestal as Gulzaar Saab," he says. "He can say in two lines what would normally take six."

The album also features collaborations with Ameri-

WATCHLIST

Still *Rocking*

INDUS CREED

Founded in 1984, this band released two hard-rock albums as *Rock Machine* before adding Indian instrumentation and rebranding in 1993. Their eponymous 1995 album achieved major success before they disbanded in 1997, but a new lineup–founding members joined by new blood–has been touring and playing new music since 2010.

SOULMATE

Formed in 2003, the Shillong-based blues rock band, fronted by songwriting duo Tipriti Kharbangar and Rudy Wallang, has been a critical darling for over two decades. Their last album *Give Love* came out in 2020, and the band played it on their nationwide tour last summer.

motherjane

MOTHERJANE

Kochi's Motherjane are one of the most influential bands in India, thanks to their early amalgamation of progressive rock and Carnatic music. They've got two studio

can jazz fusion saxophonist George Brookes and Indian ghatam maestro Vikku Vinayakram, a founding member of fusion giants Shakti. 'Iss Tan Dhan', which features the latter, is an inventive, atmospheric trippy track featuring poetry by Kabir as well as Tamil lyrics contributed by Vinayakram himself.

"You know, he's the one who expressed interest," says Joshi of the collaboration with Vinayakram. "Nikhil, Amit [Kilam] and Rahul [Ram] had gone to his concert and he said 'You've collaborated with my son, when will you collaborate with me?' It's the God of Rhythm asking, how can you say no?"

Here, as well as on the prog rock-leaning two-parter title tracks, Indian Ocean continues to iterate its trademark sound as the band pushes into new directions following the departure of founding member Susmit Sen in 2013. Older fans might miss Sen's signature guitar, but Rao's fresh approach adds a new dimension to the band's sound, particularly on upbeat, Carnatic-inspired instrumental 'Rebirth'. What remains consistent is the band's love for long songs that transform as they go. Even in an increasingly algorithm-driven, low-attention-span market, Indian Ocean insists on giving songs the time and space to evolve as they will.

"We know that music consumption has changed, attention spans have declined, so we did have some healthy discussions with our management about how to present our music in today's rapidly changing world," says Rao. "We did think about radio edits, but we decided against it. As Rahul [Ram] told us, we should just continue doing what we are good at."

The band is now touring behind the record, with shows scheduled for every weekend of May and more legs to be added soon. Thirty-four years as a touring band can add up to a lot of wear and tear—both physical and emotional—and I wonder if especially the older members of the group sometimes feel the strain. Both acknowledge that it can be tiring, but at the end of the day, they're just grateful to be able to do what they do.

"After Covid, I'm never going to complain about being overworked," jokes Rao. "Yes, waking up at 4 am in a hotel to go to the airport night after night isn't the most glamorous part of being a musician. But we are very grateful to be doing what we do."

In between shows, the band is also working on a couple of film tracks, following on their successes with movies like *Masaan* (2015) and *Peepli [Live]* (2010). They're also thinking of the next album, which they assure us won't take another nine years, though Joshi is quick to point out that they had done a bunch of other stuff, including at least two film soundtracks in that time.

"Those [compositions] have restrictions, in terms of time, thought process, someone else's dictum," he says. "So, when we have a free hand to create something of our own, we like to give it the time to evolve, till it's something we're proud of. That process is long because we enjoy doing it that way." ■

Bhanuj Kappal

> ***In between shows, the band is also working on a few film tracks following on their success from films like Peepli [Live] and Masaan***

albums—including 2002's *Insane Biography*—under their belt, and released their latest EP *111* last year. There's also a bit of controversy, with the band involved in a legal tussle with former vocalist Baiju Dharmajan, but they continue to play and tour.

▼ PARIKRAMA

Formed in 1991, Parikrama were a dominant force in Indian rock in the 1990s, enjoying success with 1995 single 'Till I'm No One Again' and 2001's 'But It Rained'. Eventually overshadowed by more prolific newcomers, Parikrama has continued to tour relentlessly, even after the tragic death of guitarist Sonam Sherpa in 2020.

THE NEW ALBUM
Available Worldwide Mar 22

▲ THERMAL AND A QUARTER

This Bengaluru quartet have been putting out contrarian, groove-laden rock music since 1996, and their 2005 release *Plan B* is an Indian rock classic. They continue to tour and make music (their latest release being last year's 'What World'), while also running their own music school Taaqademy.

by Bhanuj Kappal

THE SPOILS OF HISTORY

PODCAST

With a web series in the works, a popular podcast in its third season and a new book wrapped up, **William Dalrymple** *is in a happy place*

H

How exactly did a provincial trading company end up becoming the most dominant political and economic force in the Indian subcontinent? What set of circumstances in the late Mughal era allowed the East India Company to take over, well, everything in India? These are the kinds of questions historian William Dalrymple's 2019 work of nonfiction *The Anarchy* (Bloomsbury Publishing) seeks to answer.

The bestselling book, which was nominated for the Bailie Gifford Prize (and included in former US President Barack Obama's annual 'Books of the Year' list), will soon be adapted into a web series by producer Siddharth Roy Kapur's Roy Kapur Productions. Screenwriter Jeremy Brock (*The Last King of Scotland*, *Brideshead Revisited*) will adapt the book while Dalrymple himself will be a consultant.

Talking about the book and its cinematic potential, Dalrymple says, "It really is the most remarkable story. One company from a tiny island on the other side of the world eventually took over as the government of India, taking loans from Indian banks. At one point, the head offices in India had only a few hundred Englishmen. I wanted to write about this vivid set of charac-

> Dalrymple's greatest strength is to make history accessible to the lay reader—both ***The Anarchy*** and ***Empire*** help him do that

ters, both British and Indian. This is one hundred per cent non-fiction and everything is footnoted, but I wanted the book to have the intimacy we associate with fiction."

In the streaming era, several different kinds of historical dramas have flourished online. Today, there are streaming shows on the Vikings (Netflix's *Vikings: Valhalla*), the 18th-century Russian royals (*The Great* on Amazon Prime Video), the incumbent British royals (Netflix's *The Crown*), the Ottomans (Netflix's *Rise of Empires: Ottoman*) and so on. In such a crowded genre, how will *The Anarchy* distinguish itself?

"I don't think it's a crowded space," says Dalrymple. "There haven't really been too many representations of the East India Company onscreen. And of the ones we do see, some of them are too caught up with nationalist sentiments. Historical accuracy isn't really a feature. When you look at the British stories of that period (18th and 19th centuries), there are hundreds of BBC dramas, Jane Austen adaptations and so on.... By comparison, the Indian onscreen stories of those eras are not that common."

In August 2022, Dalrymple and Anita Anand (the duo previously co-authored the nonfiction book *Koh-i-Noor*) launched a podcast called *Empire*. Season 1, which ran from August till December last year, covered the rise and fall of the East India Company, the British Raj, Mahatma Gandhi, the Partition, and Independence. Season 2, covering the Ottoman Empire, ended earlier this month. Anand and Dalrymple are now covering the history of slavery across civilisations in the ongoing Season 3, which began on May 4. *Empire* was voted No. 1 on Apple's annual 'Shows That Made Us Think' list.

Asked if the podcast was in competition with his books, Dalrymple said, "We see it as a way of getting to talk to historians whose work we love, and in a way promoting those books."

Dalrymple's greatest strength has been making history accessible for the lay reader, to transform the dreariness of our schoolbooks into page-turning momentum. Within the confines of that project, *The Anarchy* is perhaps his greatest achievement. And with the *Empire* podcast, he and Anand are bringing some of world history's most thrilling chapters to a new generation of listeners. Coincidentally, the day this interview was conducted was also the day Dalrymple finished work on his next book, *The Golden Road*, which brings together three interlinked historical narratives about "Indian influence spreading across the world" (one of the narratives, for example, follows how the Indian numeric system travelled to the rest of the world).

"I think Indian readers should be quite happy with this work," Dalrymple says, with a hearty laugh. ■

Aditya Mani Jha

CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

PODCASTS

TO LEND AN EAR TO

THE LIT PICKERS

The Lit Pickers
with Deepanjana Pal & Supriya Nair

Writers Deepanjana Pal and Supriya Nair host this sharp, funny, free-flowing podcast where they talk about everything literary—dying genres, underrated authors, posthumous revisions, literature festivals, books that challenged literary establishments and so on. The podcast began life in 2020 and has 25-plus episodes so far, with the latest being released in March last year.

KHANDAAN: A BOLLYWOOD PODCAST

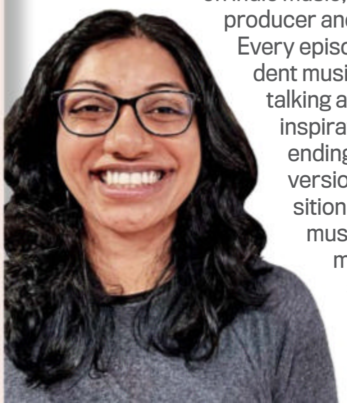
There are bigger and more popular Bollywood podcasts out there, but few have *Khandaan*'s style, encyclopaedic knowledge or easygoing vibe. Hosted by three millennials who eat, sleep and dream Bollywood—Asim Burney, Amrita Rajan and Sujoy Singha—*Khandaan* has had over 180 episodes so far. While Bollywood (especially the movies of the Khan trio) remains the focus, there have been lively discussions on films from other Indian industries too, *Ponniyin Selvan 2*, for example.

NO SUGARCOAT BY POOJA DHINGRA

noSugarcoat
with
POOJA
DHINGRA
featuring
VARUN
DUGGIRALA

A renowned pastry chef and owner of the Le15 Patisserie that specialises in macarons and other French desserts, Dhingra started the No SugarCoat podcast in 2018. In it, she discusses different food traditions, recipes and her own journey to chefdom. She invites fellow professional chefs (like Rashmi Uday Singh and Thomas Zacharias) regularly, who talk about the pressures of cooking on strict timelines, running a business in a cut-throat industry and so on.

MAED IN INDIA



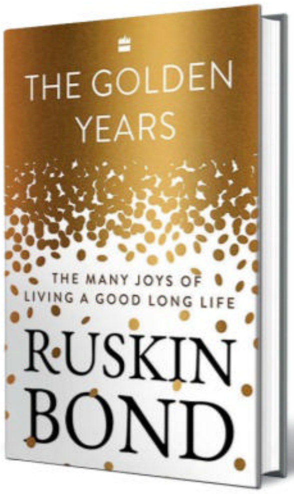
One of the few podcasts in the country that focus on indie music, Maed in India is hosted by producer and former RJ Mae Thomas. Every episode features an independent musician (in India or abroad) talking about their music, their inspirations, the conversation ending with acoustic, minimalist versions of their original compositions. This one is for the true music geek interested in every micro-aspect of making music—including tech skills like recording and mixing.

BOOKS

AUTUMN SONATA

Sound advice from **Ruskin Bond** on how to live a good life, especially in the twilight years

THE GOLDEN YEARS
The Many Joys of Living a Good Long Life
by Ruskin Bond
HARPERCOLLINS
₹399; 168 pages



One is never too old to write a novel or any other book for that matter. Agatha Christie was well into her eighties when she wrote some of her bestselling detective stories. At the age of 90, P.G. Wodehouse continued to regale us with stories of Bertie Wooster and his valet Jeeves. The body might falter but, if you are lucky, the brain will keep ticking away. Ruskin Bond, one of our most admired writers, is still active. At the age of 89, he has come up with a gem. *The Golden Years* is about the many joys of living a good, long life.

Bond is never lonely, but he enjoys solitude. "Loneliness is something that is thrust upon us, solitude is something we seek," he writes. When loneliness threatens to creep in, he goes for long walks through the hills around Landour, the place he calls home and where he is spending his twilight years with his family. Or he settles down in a quiet corner to read a book.

Bond was 17 when he wrote his first novel, *The Room on the Roof*. He wrote it on a portable typewriter he bought with borrowed money. It is now useless, but lies in his attic as a reminder of the person who had so generously lent him the money.

> When loneliness threatens to creep in, **Ruskin Bond** goes for walks in the hills around Landour. He now takes life one day at a time

I was a teenager living in distant Fiji when I read excerpts from *The Room on the Roof* in the literary magazine *Caravan*. Since then, I have been hooked on Ruskin Bond. He is prolific and has published over a hundred books that include novels, essays, poems and books for children. These days, he prefers to write short pieces because they can be completed in a day. He takes life one day at a time. "Living one day at a time or if you prefer, one week or one month at a time, we come to appreciate all that's beautiful and worthwhile on earth—nature's seasons; sunrise and sunset; night and day, sunshine and rain, the wealth of our forests, rivers and oceans. Also human kindness, fortitude, the creative spirit," he says.

There is good advice here on living a contented life, but Bond also takes you on brisk journeys, at times through the streets of London, at other times through the foothills of the Himalayas, exploring the pine forests and the streams. When he has forgotten to pack a lunch for a long walk, he is not above asking a stranger passing by on a mule to share his rotis with him. He will eat the roti in his company with the onion that comes with it.

This book is as slim as they come, but with an astonishing 60 chapters. Each is about 500 words long, some even shorter. It can be read in about an hour, but is best savoured in small doses. ■

Bhaichand Patel

FEMMES FATALE

Maritricide as a fast-track fix to patriarchy may be wishful thinking, but* Parini Shroff *doesn't let it get in the way of a good story

Parini Shroff's debut novel *The Bandit Queens* tells a rousing tale of female solidarity, albeit one manifesting in an unconventional form—bumping off useless, abusive husbands—packed with the right measure of wit, hilarity and irreverence. A word of advice, though: for best enjoyment, leave incredulity at the door.

Geeta has something of a reputation in her unassuming village in western

---

Sleepy Hollow

Cloaked as a suspenseful mystery, **Anupama Mohan's** debut novel is more concerned with metaphysical matters

WHERE MAYFLIES LIVE FOREVER
by Anupama Mohan
PAN MACMILLAN
₹599; 208 pages

India. Her husband Ramesh disappeared five years ago, and rumour has it that she killed him. Spoiler: she didn't. But being reviled as the local *churail* has its advantages. No one messes with her; village busybodies give her a wide berth; men avoid her. Geeta can't complain—she loves being an independent woman, with a thriving business selling her handmade jewellery. Also, Phoolan Devi is her hero.

When a fellow villager asks her to help with husband-disposal services, Geeta's carefully curated world starts to unravel. Her efforts to nip this nonsense in the bud blows up, instead, into a Bollywood-worthy chain of events. Complete with a bumbling crime lord, corrupt policemen, an irrepressible pup, a secret romance-of-sorts, and the rekindling of lost friendships.

Shroff's light touch belies the heavy truths that lie at the centre of this novel. The heaviest is how the family is a site of extreme cruelty for women. Geeta's fellow women—whether fictional or in reality—are often both breadwinners and homemakers, trapped by patriarchy's unkindest cut—marriage. Though easier to spot in the conservative societies of South Asia, it holds true everywhere in the world.

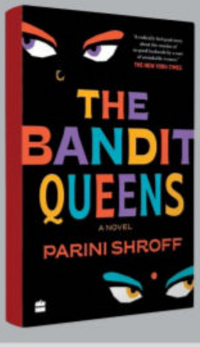
Which is what makes Shroff's motives for basing her story in a remote village in India morally suspect. As an American of Indian origin, the author's connection to the setting and characters of her story was a childhood trip to a remote village in Gujarat where her father was involved in financing a women's micro-credit group. The women and their stories stayed with Shroff over the years, and finally took shape in some of the characters in *The Bandit Queens.*

However, this could easily have been a story set elsewhere in India or the world. One can't help wonder if the rural setting plays a role in manufacturing an exotic other, for a western audience. At the very least, there is an element of classism here, a need to separate the "us" from "them", to emphasise this doesn't happen to people like us.

I can still imagine a Geeta actually making it as a single businesswoman in a deeply parochial village, or a Phoolan Devi-inspired band of women in a remote rural outcrop doing away with their violent menfolk. *The Bandit Queens*'s most unforgivable sin is that the village women speak in yuppy Americanese. It doesn't ring true in its rural setting, but that shouldn't keep you from enjoying a rollicking story. ■

Payal Dhar

THE BANDIT QUEENS
by Parini Shroff
HARPERCOLLINS
₹499; 352 pages



The first half of Anupama Mohan's debut novel *Where Mayflies Live Forever* is a series of eyewitness interviews conducted by a police officer, an ACP called Asha Peter, who we only meet after several 'POV chapters' centring other characters are done and dusted. ACP Peter (who, as per genre trappings, is a divorced and world-weary maverick) is investigating the murder of Senganoor Adhiban, a political bigwig in the small town of Sittanavasal, Tamil Nadu. We learn that Adhiban has recently been decapitated. The head is missing, as is the chief suspect Veni, a young woman who teaches geography at the local school and who was gangraped by Adhiban and his cronies four years ago.

The beauty of *Where Mayflies Live Forever* lies in the fact that during the course of these testimonies, as we learn more about Veni, the novel unfurls its true nature—a sociologically adept character study about the contrasting ways in which we bring up boys and girls, respectively.

Veni, irreverent nature-lover, knowledgeable midwife, masseur to babies and new mothers, possessor of a singularly beautiful head of hair. By all accounts, she is an unusually sensitive, kind person with a lot of goodwill in Sittanavasal (at least before she is 'spoiled', the novel's damning metaphor for rape). How could she decapitate a man in cold blood and then—allegedly—burn off her own hair and vanish into thin air?

To Mohan's credit, once the answers start to trickle in, we realise that the metaphysical is just as important as the forensic; 'Where is Veni' takes a backseat to 'Who is Veni?'. By the time ACP Peter has a grasp on the fundamentals of the case, the reader is more invested in the philosophical resolution than the criminal one. The 'POV chapters' narrated by Veni's family and friends effectively set an atmospheric, idiosyncratic tenor for the novel and Mohan has a poet's grasp of the unusual adjective, the devastating, paragraph-ending one-liner.

Mohan has a poet's grasp of the unusual adjective, the devastating, paragraph-ending one-liner

In the chapter where Peter is given the narrator's reins, she reflects upon the fact that a solid homicide investigation "(...) was not always about cause and effect, it required critical imagination...even a flight or two of inspired fancy, all the while coordinating, calibrating and shifting facts, premises, conclusions like a card-sharper moves his playing deck before the watchful eyes of his patrons: if you missed a trick, the game was lost." Mohan may well have been talking about her own modus operandi while writing her novel, a work of fiction that 'performs' genre rather than embracing it un-ironically. And what a marvellous performance it is, too. ■

Aditya Mani Jha

ODISHA FC

SPORTS

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

CLIFFORD MIRANDA STANDS VINDICATED AS THE COACH WHO HELPED ODISHA FC CLINCH ITS FIRST SUPER CUP

It's a day Clifford Miranda won't forget in a hurry. On March 16, he was handed the reins of Odisha FC, after the departure of their Spanish head coach, Josep Gombau. There was this unsaid pressure ahead of the Super Cup, especially after Odisha's stellar season where they finished sixth on the table to make the Indian Super League (ISL) playoffs for the first time. However, results were the last thing on Miranda's mind. "My goal was to convince the players that I am the man to take them forward," says Miranda.

The wait wasn't long for Odisha. On April 25, they clinched their first silverware after beating Bengaluru FC 2-1 in the final of the Super Cup. And a few days later, they continued their winning run against last season's I-League champions, Gokulam Kerala FC, to qualify for the group stages of the AFC Cup later this year.

> Miranda was aware of what previous coach Josep Gombau had achieved, but he was also clear that he wanted to imprint his own style

"To represent India in Asian club competition is huge," says Miranda. He would know. During his playing days, the midfielder was a part of the Dempo SC side that made the semi-final of the AFC Cup in 2008—a first for Indian football. He spent over a decade with the Goan club, winning the domestic league on five occasions. When he finally called it a day in 2017, he immediately jumped at a coaching opportunity with FC Goa's youth development programme. "I wanted to stop playing when I was still good. I had done my licences by then and my intent was to develop footballers," he says.

After winning the Goa Professional League with the reserve side of FC Goa and picking up the ISL League Winners Shield as interim coach of the senior team, Miranda moved to Odisha as assistant coach at the start of last season. Once handed the top job, he was aware of what Gombau had achieved, but he was also clear that he wanted to imprint his own style of play at the club.

However, time was a constraint, the first game just three weeks away. Besides, the lack of match practice meant that their first real test was against East Bengal in their drawn opener. But the players responded well to the tweaks and changes Miranda implemented, remaining unbeaten for the rest of the tournament. "I could have continued with the way things were under Gombau. But in case I failed, I didn't want to regret the fact that I hadn't implemented my methodology," says Miranda.

These days, Miranda is back in Goa spending time with family. The team will regroup towards the end of July for preseason, as they gear up for their debut in Asian competition, besides the ISL and other domestic cups.

"The respect and appreciation of the players is more important for me than winning the Super Cup or qualifying for the AFC Cup. It validates my belief that I'm on the right track," adds Miranda.

Odisha's Super Cup success was the first major trophy earned by an Indian coach at the helm of an ISL club. Since the league was established in 2013, the only other Indian to have led an ISL side is Khalid Jamil, who worked with NorthEast United FC in 2021-22. "The hope is that more Indian coaches can guide teams in the near future. The new generation is so much better than some of the foreigners who come here. I hope they can be trusted by the owners to take on this responsibility," says Miranda. ■

Shail Desai

SONG OF ICE AND GRIT

Defying challenges, the **Indian women's ice hockey** team is making its mark on the global stage

FACEBOOK ICE HOCKEY FAMILY

The opening match of the Ice Hockey Women's Asia and Oceania Championship in April left the Indian national team devastated. They had taken the lead as early as the fourth minute, but at the final buzzer, Iran thumped them 17-1.

The players were aware of what it had taken to just make it to the tournament in Thailand. They went back to the drawing board, regrouped and came back to win their next two group encounters against Kyrgyzstan (3-0) and Kuwait (6-0). It helped them qualify for the quarterfinal where their winning run continued, edging past Malaysia 3-2.

And though they lost the semi-final to Thailand (0-13) and the third place match to Singapore (1-3), they knew they had redeemed their campaign to finish on a high.

"We were shattered yet frustrated after the Iran match because we knew our potential. The team discussed all the things we had worked on and it clicked for us there on," says Diskit Angmo, who was awarded the Most Valuable Player of the tournament.

It was a sign of the mental fortitude the team has developed while chasing ice hockey against all odds. The sport continues to be a seasonal affair, played only through the winter months due to a lack of infrastructure. Angmo recalls how they struggled to find players during their first international tournament in 2016. In fact, the local championship that year in Ladakh had just three women's teams. "The number of girls who have taken to the sport has jumped and we had 10 teams this year. In fact, there was competition even to get on the national team—to have five new faces is massive," says Angmo.

> Ice hockey continues to be a seasonal affair in India, played only through the winter months

Most of the players still come from Ladakh, though the Ice Hockey Association of India (IHAI) has made efforts to take the sport to other regions as well. "We organised the national championship in Gulmarg in 2021 and Kaza last year. It's how we managed to scout two girls from Himachal Pradesh who represented India," says Harjinder Singh, general secretary of IHAI.

A handful of players were picked from the national championship in February. For a month before the tournament, they were part of a conditioning camp in Leh led by Bharat Singh. Head coach Darrin Harrold monitored their progress from his base in Canada through his deputies, Tsewang Gyaltson and Amit Belwal, before joining the team in Thailand.

Funding, however, remains a challenge. "They are coming up with a policy for sports such as ice hockey that are not registered under the Sports Authority of India. We hope to get some support from the government through it," says Singh. ■

Shail Desai

GIRL Next DOOR

IN HER LATEST OTT FILM ***KATHAL***, SANYA MALHOTRA DEMONSTRATES HER TALENT FOR PLAYING RELATABLE CHARACTERS

with Suhani Singh

Photograph by **BANDEEP SINGH**

Q. You seem to have a liking for the small-town young woman, be it *Pataakha* or *Pagglait*. What was your approach to playing Mahima, the police officer in *Kathal*?

My conditioning since my debut film, *Dangal*, has been that without homework, *set pe naa jaaiye, naak kat jaayegi* [Go to set well-prepared or risk being embarrassed]. I've never been around police officers. Through *Kathal*, I got to spend time with female officers in Gwalior. One of them said, '*Hum auratein hain joh aaram se sun paati hain*' [We're good listeners]. After meeting her, I felt Mahima could be feminine, empathetic and have a gentle quality to her.

Q. This is your fourth Netflix film. Is it hard to say no to Netflix, and more so to Guneet Monga, who also produced *Pagglait*?

She understands what I like. I didn't want to do *Pagglait* because I didn't have the confidence to shoulder a film. But she changed my mind. I saw how well it was received.... She was excited for *Kathal* and I felt if she is excited, then I must trust her. She has a good script sense. We all know that. She has an Oscar.

Q. What do you think OTT has given you as an actor?

A lot of freedom to experiment with the kind of roles I am doing and the scripts I can pick. Not only actors but a lot of people in the industry also feel that now. I have seen a major change in my career and have access to a way bigger audience.

Q. Do you think 2023 is a seminal year for you with films like *Jawan* and *Sam Bahadur*?

Definitely. I shot five films back-to-back in 2022. I was jumping from one set to another.... I was doing so much work, but I couldn't see any of them coming out and judge where my career was going. This year is about sitting back and watching what works for me. *Mrs.* [a remake of *The Great Indian Kitchen*] is completely different from *Sam*. *Jawan* is another ballgame altogether. It is a big one for me.

SUSTAINABILITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO.

VEDANTA, NOW AMONG THE TOP 10 GLOBAL LEADERS IN

DOW JONES SUSTAINABILITY™ WORLD INDEX

- The only Indian company to be added to the Sustainability World Index in 2022
- Vedanta Ltd also part of Dow Jones Sustainability Emerging Market Index
- Ranked 6th out of 216 Metals & Mining companies worldwide in CSA by S&P Global
- Achieved a score improvement from 62 to 76, a 22.5% jump from FY21
- Emerged among the top 3 percentile of Metals & Mining companies worldwide
- Hindustan Zinc has been ranked 3rd globally and 1st in Asia Pacific in the S&P Corporate Sustainability Assessment under the Metal & Mining Sector
- Vedanta Aluminium is globally ranked 2nd among aluminium companies in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index

vedanta
transforming for good

OIL & GAS | ZINC-LEAD-SILVER | ALUMINIUM | COPPER | IRON-STEEL & FERRO ALLOYS
POWER | SEMICONDUCTORS | DISPLAY GLASS

Member of
Dow Jones
Sustainability Indices
Powered by the S&P Global CSA

The Financial and Travel Platform to address your diverse needs

EbixCash is a one stop non-aligned destination for consumers, small & large businesses, financial institutions, insurance entities, airports, ports, bus roadways corporations etc. for all their payments, remittance, foreign exchange, travel, BPO, healthcare and fintech needs.

EBIXCASH Cabs
EBIXCASH Cabs
Book now

EBIXCASH

Har Khushi Ke Liye Kaafi Hai

PAYMENT SOLUTIONS **TRAVEL** **SMART TECHNOLOGY** **SMART INITIATIVES**